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# CATHEDRALS OF FRANCE

BY  
HELEN HENDERSON

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS  
AND AN END-PAPER MAP



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

1929



TO  
MY OLD FRIEND  
LAURA BOORMAN  
IN MEMORY OF MIDNIGHT TALKS  
AT DINGLEY DELL  
THESE PAGES ARE LOVINGLY DEDICATED

H. H.

*18 December, 1928*





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(From a drawing by W. J. Harrington)

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(Photo: courtesy of M. Etienne Huet, Chartres)

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# CATHEDRALS OF FRANCE

## CHAPTER I

### DISCOVERING CATHEDRALS

TRAVELLING across France in any direction whatsoever and by any means within one's means is a rich delight. Whether it be tramping, biking, driving one's own little motor-car, or being driven handsomely in something better; whether it be bridging distances at a stride in an all first-class *rapide de luxe* or merely jogging along in the unspeakable *omnibus* train which takes all the *haltes* in one of those cross-country branch lines where expresses are unknown, there is an exhilaration in the process peculiar to France. The passing panorama is amusing and novel, the exquisite lay of the land in general is exciting, and there is endless variety of one kind and another, so that even with no more definite end in view than simply seeing the country and studying the people travel in France is highly entertaining and compensating and serves well as an object in itself.

But if errancy for the sake of errancy is good, how much better to have a purpose in wandering, and here again France is rich in resources. An American once said upon returning home—this was before Prohibition—that the chief pleasure of his trip had been in tasting the wines of the different countries. Every one to his taste, but there is indeed enjoyment to be had from this pastime, and not to take an intelligent interest in the products of one of France's chief industries is to raise a barrier between oneself and one's hosts. But wine though good is only one of

innumerable hobbies that may serve to give orientation to a summer, or even a lifetime, in France. The châteaux of the Loire have directed the course of many holiday-makers; the provincial museums have long held out inducements to me—for it is pleasant to see great men in their native setting as Puvis de Chavannes at Amiens, Ingres at Montauban, Toulouse-Lautrec at Albi. The collecting mania leads into fine and remote country; geology, botany, butterflies, would serve as pretexts; and a determination to taste every variety of cheese made in France—how many hundreds are there?—would keep the enthusiast on the go for years, from east to west, from north to south, throughout all the length and the breadth. Or one might simply pursue climate, get extraordinary variety and end greatly disillusioned about 'sunny France'.

But we have chosen, you and I, to discover cathedrals, a quest which offers the greatest incentive and which, even limited as it must be to fit between the covers of one book, will lead us as merry a chase as the cheeses. We shall have to run, if we would be thorough, from Dol in Brittany to Strasbourg in Alsace; from Eu on the Channel to Narbonne on the Mediterranean; we shall have to take diagonal routes and fly off at tangents, for France has planted her cathedrals far and wide without regard to convenience in touring. Her cathedrals, of which there are roughly speaking about one hundred and fifty, do not arrange themselves obligingly in groups, as do those of England, which may be done by trains without too much weariness of spirit. For some reason or other the English cathedrals have managed to attract the great railway lines to them, while those of France are strewn across the map of that fair country in a most random manner. They lie for the most part on the main lines, it is true, but these are many, and as they all radiate from Paris and are but seldom connected one with another, except by those shocking little branch lines or *départemental* railways, which baroque travel, the grouping of visits, except by motor, is out of the question.

A typical case stands out in my mind. I was at Albi, in the Tarn, and, having absorbed all I could of the most curiously magnificent cathedral which makes the fame of this place, wanted to get to Cahors, in the Lot. These *départements* all but touch each other, and by motor the distance between the two cities is only about forty-five miles. But Albi is on an insignificant little branch of the Orléans railway, while Cahors is on the main piece between Limoges and Toulouse. I had worked it out that the only practicable thing to do was to go straight to Toulouse and from there to take a fast train direct to Cahors; but chancing to mention this plan to the station-master at Albi he and his assistants would not allow me this extravagance. Though it meant two extra hours' sleep for me in the morning, it was pointed out by these eager officials that the *détour* by way of Toulouse added fifty-one kilometres to the journey and a proportionate increase in the cost of the ticket! The argument as they put it seemed at the time unanswerable, though I tried feebly to protest that the comfort of my plan was perhaps worth the difference. They wouldn't hear of it. They figured out my schedule for me with passionate interest and made me a little journey in four pieces with as many changes in which there was not a superfluous inch of travel. It was most ingenious. I was to leave Albi at 6.22 a.m., get to Tessonnières at 6.46, leave Tessonnières at 6.53, arrive at Saint-Sulpice-du-Tarn at 7.43, and so on, changing for the last time at Montauban, where there was a wait of over two hours for the direct train from Toulouse. It saved the kilometres and the money at the expense of the time, for at Montauban I was to lose what had apparently been gained by the early start; whichever route I took brought me to Cahors at the same hour and by the same Toulouse express, only in one case I should take it at its source and in the other catch it *en route* at Montauban. It was useless for me to try to stem the logic of these honest fellows. In the present ruinous state of the exchange it is not possible for those who profit to show contempt for the value of the

franc. I could not be ungrateful and arrogant in the face of such patient mathematics, especially as six o'clock in the morning meant nothing heroic to them—it was an hour like another. At any rate they were as inflexible as they were kind and there was nothing to do but submit.

I walked back rather soberly to my hotel and had myself written down on the slate for the early departure, getting to bed betimes as a precautionary measure, but secretly hoping that by some fluke I should be allowed to oversleep in peace. Alas! My hopes were vain. A fatherly night porter with a lantern knocked me up in the dead of darkness to receive a tin of hot water which he had boiled for me himself, as the rest of the staff was still wrapped in slumber, and in the court-yard I heard the stamping of the horses' hoofs on the stones as they were backed into the shafts of the station bus. Trains were not missed through the fault of the employees of this hotel, it was plain, and I was efficiently disposed of in the superannuated wagon with my luggage piled up on the top, and off we went. I was the only traveller in this vehicle, and although my recollection of the incident is hazy, as I moved about more like a somnambulist than a waking person, I believe that I tipped the driver rather more than the sum saved by not going to Toulouse—he seemed so conscientious and so sleepy in that cold, breakfastless dawn.

Obviously one experience of this kind is enough to discourage reliance upon the railways for getting across country. There are such cathedral cities as Périgueux, Limoges, Angoulême, and Clermont-Ferrand which seem to be conveniently disposed for grouping as they lie upon the map and which are really not too far distant one from the other as the crow flies; Amiens, Beauvais, Rouen, and Chartres, too, appear to combine in a feasible way, yet by rail these neighbouring cathedrals are separated by intricate and impossible conditions.

There is a branch line connecting Amiens and Rouen, just as there is one between Rouen and Chartres, and another from Chartres to Orléans, but the service is atro-



cious, and it is a thousand times less irksome to go from one of these cities to the other by way of Paris. Paris is the great general point of departure, and as a very great many cathedrals may be seen comfortably by making day trips from this agreeable centre, an excellent plan is to establish oneself in Paris and to make excursions from there.

A circle with a radius of seventy-five miles drawn around Paris would embrace the important cathedrals of Orléans, Chartres, Evreux, Amiens, Beauvais, Senlis, Meaux, and Sens, not to mention the tragic ruin of Soissons. Widen it by twenty-five miles and it includes Rouen, Reims, and Laon. Stretch it by but a few kilometres and it touches Chalons-sur-Marne and Troyes.

Another rich base is Tours, with its exquisite cathedral. From Tours there are direct and convenient lines to Angers, Le Mans, Blois, Orléans, Bourges, Poitiers, and Angoulême. Caen, with its magnificent abbey churches, is a convenient pivot for Bayeux, Coutances, and Lisieux. But as we go south distances are greater and there are no such prolific centres.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GOTHIC MOVEMENT

**O**F the cathedrals considered the greatest in France—Reims, Chartres, Amiens, Paris, and Bourges—it is only the latter which lies at any considerable distance from Paris. Even Bourges is less than one hundred and fifty miles away. All are included in what in ancient times was known as the royal domain—that part of Gaul which was, strictly speaking, France. These greatest cathedrals, as well as many others only less remarkable, are all contemporary, or nearly so: they were built between the years 1180 and 1240; work upon them starts in the first years of the reign of Philippe-Auguste and declines in the early part of the reign of Saint-Louis.

It is not to be supposed that France had no cathedrals before the Gothic period. On the contrary, all these twelfth- and thirteenth-century monuments replace earlier Roman churches, usually upon the same sites. But before the Gothic movement the great churches were the abbeys. These took precedence in size and importance over the bishop's church. The cathedral differs from other churches in that it contains the bishop's throne or seat of authority, but as the bishop's power was negligible at this time as compared with that of the chiefs of the monastic orders, there was a corresponding difference in the size and magnificence of their respective churches.

In feudal times the position of the abbots in the world of religion was similar to that of the barons in the social world, and while the barons, like so many tyrants, had divided the soil of France among themselves, the abbots too were powerful proprietors enjoying special privileges, feudal

lords in effect under the protection of the pope. Such an organization as Jumièges, Vézelay, or Saint-Germain-des-Prés was a small world in itself. Its vast domains, centred around the abbey church, provided food and shelter for great numbers of people and included within their enclosures farms, factories, workshops, and schools. The abbots took part in all the big political affairs, they moulded the minds of youth, they monopolized all the advantages of wealth, power, education, and activity.

But as the Dark Ages gave way to an epoch of enlightenment there was a general reaction against the self-imposed authority of the feudal lords and the autocratic domination of the monks. France in Philippe-Auguste had a King whose brave and prudent character raised royalty to a degree of power not known since Charlemagne. The crown now ceased to be merely a centre about which the feudal states were grouped. The king's sovereignty, hitherto restricted to the Ile-de-France, while the barons held the greatest provinces of Gaul, was extended to include Normandy, Artois, Vermandois, Maine, Touraine, Anjou, and Poitou, the richest provinces of Gaul and those which held the most active and industrious populations. Philippe-Auguste conquered them and added them to the royal domain.

At the same time the populations of the cities were becoming educated. As their intelligence increased they began to amass wealth, and with wealth they developed symptoms of emancipation. They formed themselves into communes and, banded together under chiefs of their own choosing, prepared for a policy of resistance against the feudal lords. Philippe-Auguste protected the communal movement, Paris was fortified and became the real capital of France, and a central force was organized.

Now the bishops, who had never taken advantage of the position due to their spiritual power, seeing that the moment had come to assert themselves, and knowing that in the menaced fight the lords would be vanquished, broke away, separated their cause from that of the seigneurs and placed

and Troyes. In Burgundy and the Bourbonnais, Auxerre, Nevers, and Lyon, which were nearest to the kingdom, rebuilt theirs, while Autun and Langres, which were farther away, preserved their ancient churches. In the province of Guyenne, which remained English until the time of Charles V, only Bordeaux made an effort to follow, while Périgueux, Angoulême, Tulle, Cahors, and Agen maintained their old monuments. Soon the viscounty of Carcassonne became part of the royal domain, and was the only place to accept the direct influence of the official architecture amid countries that continued to follow the bastard Roman traditions until the fifteenth century. As for Provence, which remained outside the kingdom until Louis XI's reign, the Gothic movement did not penetrate, or at least produced only sad imitations, importations which, as Huysmans says, 'are but ill-assorted with the beings that people the south and with a blue sky that spoils them'. This movement, in any case, is restricted and timid and soon dies out on account of the political disasters of the fourteenth century. In Brittany the spread of the Gothic influence was tardy, and its results there show a character as much derived from England as from Normandy and the Maine.

Outside the royal domain nothing of consequence was done until towards the end of the thirteenth century, after the monarchy had practically united the provinces of Gaul to France. At that time several dioceses replaced their old monuments by large cathedrals after the French models. At the death of Philippe le Bel, in 1314, the royal domain had swallowed up Champagne, possessed Languedoc, annexed Provence, and acquired Auvergne and Burgundy. Under the impetus of these additions Montpellier, Carcassonne, Narbonne, and Lyon overhauled their cathedrals, while Clermont-Ferrand tried to follow their example. Only the English provinces and Provence resisted. At the death of Charles V, in 1380, the English were reduced to Bordeaux, Calais, and the Cotentin—that part of Normandy which lies just south of Cherbourg. But the spring had run dry and the cathedrals whose reconstruction was not

begun before the close of the thirteenth century remained as they were, while those under way were left unfinished or were completed with difficulty, generally through the personal efforts of the bishop, who in many cases used his own fortune to complete what the enthusiasm of a whole population had enabled him to begin. For that matter not one cathedral is finished as planned. It is only in such a small church as the Sainte-Chapelle, done under pressure in a few years, that is seen a perfectly executed Gothic masterpiece.

But this is not all. Curiously enough, after the great fever of building had passed, after the excitement of the Crusades had subsided, after France had established her unity as a nation, the cathedrals were suffered to lapse wholly from their place in public attention. They were cast into the shade as monuments by the constructions of the Renaissance and kept there by the architecture of the Classic revival. This is so true that there is a universal tendency to believe that, of the French kings, François I was the first to patronize the arts, whereas the fact is that from the end of the twelfth century onwards we see architecture and the arts related to it develop with extraordinary vigour in the royal domain, and above all in the Ile-de-France, that is to say in that part of it which, after the dispersal of the feudal possessions, remained the heritage of kings.

If we look into the case of cathedrals only a little we shall be surprised to find into what a state of neglect and degradation they were suffered to fall, and having fallen were left up to well into the second quarter of the last century. Cathedrals which now make the wealth and pride of the cities fortunate enough to possess them were not looked at and scarcely spoken of, except to be cited as the production of ignorance and barbarity. As late as 1825, Viollet-le-Duc assures us, no books existed which could be consulted by a student of medieval architecture. Masters of architecture ignored or barely admitted the existence of the magnificent churches which cover the soil of Europe, and especially France; while we have it again, on the same authority,

that a student feeling himself carried away by a sort of mysterious admiration for the churches and fortresses of the Middle Ages dared not avow a penchant for what seemed to indicate a depraved taste.

It was England which led the way in the revival of interest in this ancient Art and, inspired by the appreciation and work of her neighbours upon the Norman edifices across the Channel, France at last began to take stock of her treasures and to make some attempt to classify her medieval monuments according to style and epoch. In 1831 a treatise was addressed to the Minister of the Interior, on the monuments in the *départements* of Oise, Aisne, Nord, Marne, and Pas-de-Calais, in which the Government's attention was drawn to the riches which lay at its door. Later Prosper Mérimée followed up these researches and, visiting all the ancient provinces of France, saved many buildings from vandalism and ruin.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BIBLE OF THE POOR

**I**N view of the immense interest which these monuments now excite, as a result of what scholars have rediscovered and made known of their original intention, it is difficult to understand how it was that for centuries after their decline the cathedrals, which had been the very source of knowledge and wisdom to former generations, were so neglected that they stood as sealed books before the people. After the second half of the sixteenth century the religious Art of the Middle Ages lost contact and became an enigma. The symbolism which was its soul died out, while the Church itself blushed at legends that had cradled Christianity during so many centuries. Many false notions, too, had gained currency, and the most shocking ignorance prevailed even among the erudite.

It is only since about the middle of the last century that the significance of the imagery presented by the churches, in sculpture, in glass-painting, and in wood-carving has been even faintly suspected. The meaning of these works had become obscured and unintelligible to new generations who no longer conceived the world in the same fashion. The function of Art, too, had entirely changed, and to study medieval Art, as one sometimes did, without regard to subject, preoccupied solely with its abstract expression or its technique, as we look at the exhibits of a current salon, was to confound confusion, for the medieval sculptors and painters had not the same idea of Art as those of the Renaissance. They did not think the choice of subject a matter of indifference nor pretend that a statue was but an amusing arabesque

designed to please the eye. We of the modern school like to say that the great function of Art is to please, whereas in the Middle Ages every form clothes a thought. This thought animates the material and controls its line and movement. It was not then, as now, a question of Art for Art's sake, for with these remoter artists form and idea are inseparable, and even when the execution is mediocre the work still interests us by force of the message which it conveys. However naïve its workmanship, a soul seems to inhabit its form and to seek to communicate with us.

The Middle Ages conceived the cathedral as the Bible of the poor—a name given to it in the fifteenth century. Simple and ignorant people learned there by their eyes all that they knew of their faith. It was by the statues of the portals and the pictures of the windows, the imagery of capitals and surbases, of bosses and sockets, that the clergy aimed to teach the faithful the greatest number of truths. They knew the power of Art over these obtuse and childish minds. For the immense crowd of the illiterate, for the masses who had neither psalter nor missal and who retained of Christianity only what it saw, ideas had to be materialized and truths clothed in a tangible form.

It was part of the system that the cathedral should express certitude and faith, never doubt. This impression of serenity is still its strongest gift to us, even when we are technically of another creed. 'From afar with her transepts, her flèches, and her towers she seems like a powerful ship setting sail for a long voyage. All the city may embark without fear in her robust flanks. Approach, and at the porch we find Jesus Christ as each man encounters Him who comes into the world. He is the key to the enigma of life. Around Him is written the response to all our questions. We shall know how the world began and how it will finish. The statues, each one of which is the symbol of an age of the world, measure for us its duration. All these men whose history we should know



are under our eyes. These are they who under the Old or the New Law were types of Christ, for men exist but in proportion to their participation in the life of the Saviour. The others, kings, conquerors, philosophers, are but names, vain shadows. Thus the world and the history of the world becomes plain.' <sup>1</sup>

But aside from its religious teachings the cathedral was also the great universal source of all knowledge. 'In the Middle Ages', says Victor Hugo, 'humanity thought nothing important that it did not write in stone.' Designed to expound the truths of the universe the cathedral pictured all that it was thought necessary for man to know. The statues of its porch and the panels of its windows set forth, with infinite patience and variety, the history of the world since its creation, the dogmas of religion, the lives of the saints, the hierarchy of the virtues, the mysteries of science, and the practice of the arts and crafts. By means of its images the highest conceptions of theology and the latest discoveries of science were brought within the scope of the humblest intelligence. The cathedral was the complete revelation, and when in action it combined all the arts—oratory, music, the living drama of the mysteries, and the immobile drama of the statues. 'It was', says Mâle, 'more than Art—it was pure light before it had been divided and broken up by the prism. Man shut off in a social class, in a métier, scattered, broken by work all his days, there took back the sentiment of the unity of his nature. There he found equilibrium and harmony. The crowd assembled for the great fêtes felt itself a living entity. It became the mystic body of Christ whose soul melted in its soul. The faithful were humanity, the cathedral was the world, the spirit of God filled at once man and the creation. The word of Saint Paul became a reality: one was and moved in God. This a man of the Middle Ages felt subconsciously on a beautiful Christmas or Easter Day, when elbows touched, when the whole city filled the immense church.'

<sup>1</sup> Emile Mâle, *L'Art religieux du XIII siècle*.

The cathedral reflected and expressed the intellectual awakening of its epoch. In a sense it illustrated in its exhaustive imagery, in glass and wood and stone, the *Sommes*, the *Mirrors of Nature*, the *Images of the World* which the thirteenth century produced in quantities ; for it was at this time that the conception of the universe arrived at its perfect expression. Universities were being created in all Europe, the Sorbonne came into being and grew rapidly, working ardently at the edifice of human knowledge. All the university doctrines found plastic form in the cathedrals. The *Speculum Majus* of Vincent de Beauvais, which was brought out in the middle of the century, seemed to contemporaries the supreme effort of human science and is even yet the admiration of scholars.

How is it possible for us to grasp the meaning of the wealth of imagery on the Gothic churches without knowing something of the scheme underlying their decoration. This great encyclopædia of nature is the key to the whole system. The days of the Creation mark its different chapters. The elements, the minerals, the vegetables, the animals, are successively enumerated and described, and all the truths as well as all the errors which antiquity transmitted to the Middle Ages are there. As in the story of Genesis, everything leads up to the supreme work of the sixth day—the creation of man ; and it is to this that the longest passages are devoted. The Mirror of Nature is carved in an abridged form upon the façades of most of the cathedrals. We may follow it at Chartres, at Laon, at Bourges, at Lyon, all of which show us the work of the seven days. At Laon the story is told with particularly naïve details. In the beginning we see God in profound reflection before undertaking to separate night from day, and He counts upon His fingers the number of days necessary for the achievement of His work. Farther along, His task finished, the Creator, like an honest workman who has made good use of his time, sits down to rest, and, leaning on His staff, sleeps.

There is reason in the representation of the grape vine,

the raspberry bush laden with fruit, the long sprigs of the wild rose which cling to the archivolts. They illustrate the earth bringing forth vegetation, the work of the third day. Why do birds sing in the leaves of the oak while others are posed in the buttresses, if not to recall the fowl that fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven on the fifth day? Exotic animals—the lion, the elephant, the camel—with domestic creatures—the hen, the squirrel, the rabbit—enliven the surbases of the portails and typify the beasts of the earth, the cattle, and ‘every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth’; while over all monsters attached by their wings of stone bark in the heights.

We wonder to see subjects apparently so unrelated to the story of Christianity given so much prominence upon the façades of cathedrals, but the faithful of the Middle Ages understood why they were there and knew too how to interpret the more complicated stories of the windows and portails. But what was as clear as crystal to them became hopelessly obscure to our sophisticated vision. Meanings that were plain to the simple piety of the twelfth century were to us as enigmatic as hieroglyphics and had to be laboriously investigated by archæologists and scholars who have lighted the way in this closed world. Without their help the casual visitor stands baffled before the beauty of the portail of Amiens and turns mystified from the complexity of the north porch of Chartres, not realizing that these statues are all disposed according to a learned plan and that, so far from following the caprice of an architect, they reflect the marvellous order which Saint Thomas established in the world of ideas.

Without going deeply into this question it seems to me that some rudimentary knowledge of the language spoken by the artists of the Middle Ages is indispensable to the intelligent enjoyment of cathedrals, for the Art of this time is a sacred writing, governed by its own alphabet and rules, full of symbolism and arbitrary signs which are as fixed and unalterable as the devices in heraldry.

In the first place one must know that the circular nimbus, placed upright behind a head, is the attribute of a saint, while the nimbus stamped with a cross indicates divinity. In medieval Art the crossed nimbus was never absent from representations of God the Father, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, the aureole—a light emanating from the whole person—belongs not only to the persons of the Trinity but also to the Virgin and the saints, and expresses eternal blessedness. It was customary to represent God, the angels, Jesus, and the apostles with bare feet, while the Virgin and the saints wear shoes. An error in such a matter would have had the gravity of a heresy.

The invisible, that is to say something which was beyond the domain of Art, was expressed by means of several symbols. A hand coming out of the clouds and making a gesture of benediction, with the first three fingers raised and the other two folded, the whole surrounded by the crossed nimbus, was the sign of divine intervention—the emblem of Providence. Another abstract idea, that of eternal rest, is signified by little sexless, nude figures ranged side by side in the folds of Abraham's cloak. This group is seen on almost all cathedrals as part of the Last Judgment scene. In the visible world there were many conventional signs by which the artist conveyed his thought. For instance, several concentric curves represent the sky; waved parallel lines indicate water; a tree, expressed by a stalk breaking into two or three leaves, shows that the scene passes on land. A tower with a door is a city and if an angel is on guard between the turrets, the city is Jerusalem. All these signs and many others are in constant use in glass painting.

The artist's knowledge of these forms must be exact. He is not allowed to ignore the traditional type of person he is to represent nor to deviate ever so little from it. Saint Peter, for instance, has a short, thick beard, and his hair is short and curled tight to his head, showing the tonsure of the priest. Saint Paul is bald, with a long beard. From

the first century the type of these two chiefs has not varied. As for Saint John, the youngest of the apostles, he is beardless to the end of his days. The others are known by the attributes which they carry, but these attributes were added in the course of the centuries, for in the Roman period they carried nothing but books. Peter, however, has carried the keys from the beginning, in recognition of the power given him to lock and unlock the gates of Paradise.

As for the sources of these traditions, they were for the most part handed down by word of mouth from one generation to another. The Golden Legend, however, gives this graphic portrait of Saint Bartholomew : ' His face is white, his eyes are big, his nose is straight and regular, his beard abundant and mixed with several white hairs ; he is clothed with a purple robe and covered with a white mantle decorated with precious stones. For twenty years he has worn the same garments, which are neither worn nor soiled. Angels accompany him on his travels. His countenance is always the same, affable and serene. He foresees and knows everything ; he understands and speaks the language of all peoples, and what I say at this moment he knows ' ! The legend is as exact as the statue, for in the minds of the faithful there must be no doubt. The people were so well instructed in these matters that any deviation from the tradition in type or costume would have thrown them into confusion. They were accustomed to see the Virgin with her veil upon her hair as a symbol of her virginity, and to recognize the Jews by their conical bonnets, the shape affected by them doubtless in the Middle Ages.

In the thirteenth century Art was one of the forms of liturgy, and in piously holding to the elements of the ancient tradition it attained a grandeur to which the centuries have contributed. ' There is in this medieval Art ', says Emile Mâle, ' something impersonal and profound. The identity of the artist does not always detach itself, but generations speak by his mouth, and even when the in-

dividual himself is mediocre he is raised high by the genius of his epoch. . . . After the Renaissance the artists cast off the old tradition at their own risk and peril. When they were not great it was difficult for them, in their religious works, to escape insignificance and platitude ; and when they were superior they were not more so than these docile old masters who expressed naïvely the thought of the Middle Ages.'

## CHAPTER IV

### AMIENS

**A**MIENS, the capital city of Picardy, from its prominent location on the main line of the Northern Railway, midway between Calais or Boulogne and Paris, passed through by nine-tenths of the visitors coming into France from London and by thousands who disembark at Boulogne, should be one of the best known of cathedral towns. Its glorious church, the most perfect example of Gothic at its best, stands up vigorously, invitingly, an imposing bulk, as the city is approached from either direction. Yet Amiens and its cathedral suffer from precisely those reasons which should operate in its favour. It is on the 'route', not on the 'way'—the custodian made some such nice distinction in telling me sadly that while over twenty-thousand tourists annually visit Chartres, Amiens counts a bare four thousand. The truth is that visitors dislike breaking a journey of arrival or departure. There is the luggage, and they are not in the mood; and then again since they must go through Amiens coming and going they cannot bring themselves to retrace steps, and are always promising themselves to drop off at this station the next time. And when the next time comes there is great haste either to arrive or to get away—a boat to catch, or else the train does not stop, and it means passing another night in a strange hotel, and so Amiens is one of the most neglected of magnificent monuments.

It used not to be so, for our good friend Ruskin, who opened the eyes of the blind to so many of the choicer things of this world, wrote a little book in his slightly dry

and didactic manner about the cathedral. He called his little book *The Bible of Amiens*, and when it was fashionable to read Ruskin and to profit by his advice hundreds of English visitors put themselves out no end to go to this shrine recommended by the respected professor and to worship there the wood-carving of the choir stalls and the other things to which he drew their attention. Until about the year 1880 Amiens enjoyed the popularity which the scholar's book had created for it and then, as the authority began to be a little questioned, after Whistler had dared to flout him, and he rather lost his pontifical place, the cathedral's visitors dropped off little by little, but were still numerous until the War, when Amiens found itself very much on the map and thousands of soldiers and civilians saw its monument as part of their day's work, and having seen it, looked upon it as something done and did not visit it again.

It is natural that there should be a sort of friendly rivalry between Chartres and Amiens--Chartres which is so conveniently placed for holiday-makers, Chartres which is a comparatively short run out of Paris by motor, Chartres where it is so comfortably possible to put up for the night after seeing its cathedral and still be directly in line for Saint-Malo and Dinard and ever so many other delightful summer places. The enormous popularity of Chartres, to be perfectly honest, is also a matter of fashion. Without disrespect to that magnificent cathedral, it must be admitted that of the thousands who go there in preference to Amiens or Bourges, the greater part go like sheep without particularly knowing why and without real discrimination in their admiration of its beauties. If it were really the glass which takes them to Chartres, why do they not go to Bourges, where the glass is equally good? And if it were really because of a love for Gothic architecture, why do they not come to Amiens, where the style is more pure and perfect? The affection which is had for Chartres is a sort of infatuation that is not to be explained by reasonable analysis. If Amiens had its Ruskin, Chartres had its Huysmans and



its Henry Adams, but neither of these writers, I am sure, ever attracted visitors to Chartres on the same scale as Ruskin sent them to Amiens. Their books are for the initiated, Ruskin wrote simply and plainly for the type of reader who wants to be instructed.

Of the greatest cathedrals of France three stand out as monuments in which the genius of the Middle Ages attained perfection—Chartres, Reims, and Amiens. Chartres is the oldest—it was commenced in 1194 immediately after a fire had destroyed its predecessor: Reims was begun in 1210; Amiens in 1220. We may be sure that the architects watched each other jealously, and so we see at Amiens the perfection of the experiments at Chartres and Reims. The designer of Chartres was the great innovator. He gave the choir and transepts their immense development. In Roman churches and in the first stage of Gothic, the nave is so long that it forms almost the whole of the church. The builder of Chartres conceived his plan on entirely new proportions, and his short nave is scarcely one-third of the total length of the church. The sanctuary becomes the church, and the place left for the congregation is reduced accordingly.

At Chartres or at Amiens the people have less place than the priest, but at Reims the nave is longer, for Reims was the coronation cathedral and space had to be left for the crowd, eager to see its king. At Reims the proportions between nave and choir are about equal, and that factor contributed to the impression of perfection which one had in entering Reims. Reims and Chartres have the same elevation, the vaulting of the two cathedrals rises alike to thirty-seven metres. Yet at Chartres the spring of the vaulting seems more restrained. The difference is caused by the width of the naves, that of Chartres being wider makes the roof seem less high than that of Reims where the narrow nave gives the effect of a higher flight of vaulting. Chartres still holds to the twelfth-century laws of proportion where force was the quality aimed at, while Reims reflects the mentality of the thirteenth century

when the spirit dominates. Reims gives us the secret of the effectiveness of Amiens, where the nave is no wider than at Reims, but where the vaulting rises to forty-two metres and looks much higher.

Cathedrals earlier than Chartres oppress by their shadowy darkness—another relic of the Roman churches. Of this Notre-Dame of Paris is a notable example. It was the master builder of Chartres again who discovered the secret of putting light into a cathedral. If you will examine Senlis you will see a very fine example of the galleries which tradition imposed upon Gothic architects during the twelfth century. Chartres dared to do away with them, and once discarded it became possible to open vast windows in the nave, to make the aisles higher, and to make the openings wider. These advantages were so striking that after the experiment at Chartres galleries were banished for ever.

If such things interest you, it is possible to trace the development of this innovation very clearly in these three cathedrals. At Chartres the windows of the aisles remain narrow, at Reims they are higher, because the aisles too are higher, and they are also wider because they occupy the whole width of the bay. Jean d'Orbais, the builder of Reims, whose name has recently been discovered, improved upon his colleague's invention also by reducing the width of the stone divisions which at Chartres, being thick and robust, obstruct the light. At Reims the architect was inspired to divide his window by a fine tracery of stone. He invented the mullion, of which the earliest examples are at Reims.

In all these matters Amiens went farther. Her windows were so wide and high that they fell out in quantities in the sixteenth century and were never replaced in kind. The surface of glass is forty-eight metres square, against twelve metres square at Chartres. The effect originally when all this space was filled with glass of the epoch was certainly wonderful, but the material was too heavy for the method of support. They count two hundred wet days

at Amiens out of the three hundred and sixty-five, besides a constant damp air from the coast, and under this continual humidity the iron framework deteriorated, and as the stone too is of poor quality the great windows simply tumbled out and have disappeared. Of what were left, since we are on the subject of glass, the best up to the time of the War were in the chapels of the choir. These were dismounted during the War, packed in straw and put in what was thought to be a place of security, where, however, they were accidentally destroyed by fire.

Under suitable climatic conditions the windows of Amiens might have stood. As it was they lasted several centuries, and their end was undoubtedly hastened by a series of accidents, such as great wind and hail storms, and explosions. At any rate, the science of building had never been pushed so far in other directions. The width of the walls, the thickness of the pillars are reduced to an extreme limit, the arches of the aisles of the nave are carried to a prodigious height, with the result that the great nave is flooded with light, while the vaulting of the roof reaches a supreme elevation never before successfully attained. In trying to surpass it, indeed, Beauvais came to grief, and was in consequence never finished.

Figures make dull reading. Suffice it to say that of all the cathedrals of France Amiens is the vastest in its entirety. The choir of Beauvais exceeds it in height, it is true, by about eighteen feet, while the cathedral of Cologne has a slightly higher nave. Who was it first said that 'the choir of Beauvais, the nave of Amiens, the portail of Reims, and the towers of Chartres, would together form the finest church in the world'? The architect of Amiens hoped perhaps to realize such a dream in the cathedral of Beauvais, which was also his design; but he overreached himself and, after the vaulting of the choir had twice fallen in because of its gigantic proportions, the cathedral was not carried beyond its transepts. Amiens profited by this experiment and the excess attempted at Beauvais was not repeated,

The cathedral became celebrated before it was finished. It was the sensational achievement of the century, as it was the most perfect thing of its kind that the great movement had produced. One can imagine with what interest bishops and architects watched one another as the work advanced in so many cities, and how each discovery was pounced upon and utilized in the next church to arrive at the same point in construction. Amiens became at once the model cathedral upon whose lines and proportions many master works in France and elsewhere were designed. Its Lady Chapel, finished at about the time that Saint-Louis returned from the Holy Land (1246) with that supreme trophy of the Crusades, the Crown of Thorns, was adopted by the King's architect when he was called upon to build the Sainte-Chapelle as a shrine to contain the relic. Cologne adopted the general plan and arrangement of the choir of Amiens for the construction of its choir, begun in 1248. Tours, Troyes, Antwerp, Bruges, and much later Saint-Wadru of Mons all show the direct influence of this greatest of cathedrals.

The architects of Notre-Dame were three, Robert de Luzarches, who made the plan, Thomas de Cormont, and Renaud de Cormont. Their names were signed in an inscription which formerly surrounded the central stone of the great labyrinth which occupied the centre of the nave. This inscription, lettered upon a band of copper, also bore the date 1288, which was the year that the last of the architects finished his task. In addition to this there were effigies in copper of the three architects and of the bishop, Evrard de Fouilloy. This labyrinth was torn out during a vandalistic period (about 1828) when so many churches suffered at the hands of the clergy itself. A copy of the original was restored in 1894.

This feature, without being universal, was found in a great number of cathedrals, but since by its material nature it readily deteriorated most of the labyrinths were gradually effaced by the footsteps of the pilgrims, while others were destroyed by the canons after the pious significance of the

device had been lost. They appear to have combined a masonic device adopted by the architects, whose names and effigies usually ornamented the centre, with an abridged pilgrimage, a symbol of those journeys to sanctified places which the Middle Ages, especially at the time of the Crusades, imposed as penances. Such long and costly journeys were impossible to most Christians, and the labyrinths, which were sometimes called the Road to Jerusalem, were a compromise. They were longer in their convolution than one might think, and to walk the entire length of the labyrinth of Sens, for example, required two thousand steps and was not to be done under an hour. To make the penance more painful, and consequently more meritorious, the path was at times followed on the bare knees, while the exercise was accompanied by the recitation of special prayers.

That of Reims was among the largest and most celebrated of the labyrinths, but Poitiers, Arras, Chartres, Sens, and Reims all had fine ones. At Chartres the original has been preserved; it is round, as was also that of Sens, which has been destroyed. The Reims labyrinth was square with four polygonal compartments at the corners. Here the architectural significance was unmistakable since in each of the corners was the effigy of a little man carrying the emblems of the builder or mason—the compass, the T-square, etc. In the centre was a larger figure, almost effaced, but thought to have been Alberic de Humbert, the architect. Booksellers of Reims in the eighteenth century sold a little pamphlet called *Stations au Chemin de Jerusalem*, and these exercises, similar to the Stations of the Cross, were long in favour. But the mystic sense of the labyrinth was lost and it became merely a curiosity. To the slow, meditative march of pilgrims succeeded the noisy promenades of children for whom the Road to Jerusalem was a sort of glorified hop-scotch.

Nor were the children the only offenders. At Reims and Amiens on Easter Day after vespers the members of the venerable chapter united on the holy area and there,

to terminate the day of joy, the good canons played a game of *longue paume* (tennis). Sometimes even the bishop took a hand, and while they so disported themselves the choir, alternating with the organ, sang the *Victima paschali*.

Notre-Dame of Amiens presents to our admiration a nave which is unique in the world, an incomparable choir, an inimitable portail, which constitutes a magnificent page of religious iconography, and a whole perfect ensemble finished in its smallest details and surpassing in splendour the most remarkable sanctuaries of the Middle Ages. As for its situation, considerably hedged about by shops and dwellings, it is difficult to come upon it properly from any angle which will reveal its majesty at a glance, as is so charmingly possible in the case of Paris, Strasbourg, Périgueux, and various other cathedrals more picturesquely situated. At Amiens one must go round the monument itself to arrive at a clear view of its principal façade. It is a never-ending source of astonishment to me that these huge constructions should disappear so completely from view behind the wretched hovels which often surround them, whereas, seen from a distance, their bulk seems to eclipse and dwarf the whole of the town. Amiens from the train, or from the chalk hill across the river, makes a poor showing in relation to its monster church, and it is easily believed that the city's population, which was twenty-two thousand at the time of its erection, could be sheltered within its walls; but Amiens from the Rue des Trois Cailloux swallows up its cathedral and one is fairly puzzled to find it.

The usual approach is from that street by way of the Rue Robert de Luzarches, which passes the Palais de Justice, and from the opening of which there is a very favourable view of the south transept. The street named for the cathedral's architect is a quiet, provincial one, but the vista at the end is one not to be forgotten. There is the door dedicated to the gilded Virgin, simple and severe, at the street level, or nearly; above it the delicate traceried and pinnacled top with its handsome rose window, and

over all, completing the upward spring, the tapering and transparent spire, which rises from the cross. A pause here is inevitable, so beautiful is this portail, but as its features are later than those of the great façade let us leave them for the present and pass around the corner to the Place Notre-Dame and, standing well away from it against the houses across on the other side of the cleared space, take in the glory of the west portail.

Notwithstanding certain alterations, for Viollet-le-Duc has been here with his restoring hand, the façade stands as one of the most beautiful examples of its kind left by the Middle Ages, as much by the simplicity and purity of its lines as by the richness of its decoration. It is visibly inspired by the great portail of Notre-Dame of Paris, but is enriched by new and exquisite details. The great horizontal line, favoured by the Roman artists, still dominates at Paris. It is the antique line expressing serenity, and the face of Notre-Dame may be said to exhale the sense of repose in faith. Amiens has the order of Paris with the richness of Reims, and indeed had it been finished in the spirit of its original design it would be comparable to the great façade of Reims. But the original design stops at the height of the rose, and the poverty of the upper portions and the towers, which were not finished until the end of the Middle Ages, detracts a little from the richness and beauty of the lower parts.

The most celebrated work of Art at Amiens is the great statue of Christ, which stands against the pier of the central door. It is famous beyond all others of that brilliant galaxy which makes the glory of the rich portail and justifies its name—the *Beau Dieu* of Amiens. The *Beau Dieu* is the central point of the immense iconographic theme of the façade, which reveals with admirable clarity the thought that everything ends in the Redeemer as everything begins in Him. It is Christ, the teacher, who stands here, book in hand, making the familiar gesture of command. He seems to speak the words: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' Noble and majestic, authoritative and

gentle, idealistic Art attains here a degree of perfection that has never been surpassed. The façade, for the rest, will reward close study. There is the usual arrangement : a central door dedicated to the Saviour, surrounded by the apostles and the prophets, and bearing in its tympanum the powerful scene of the Last Judgment.

The smaller doors, to the right and left, are dedicated to Saint-Firmin and the Virgin, the joint patrons of the cathedral. The same dignity and aloofness, which characterize the figure of the *Beau Dieu*, mark the statues of the Virgin and Saint-Firmin, placed against the piers of their doors. Their eyes seem fixed upon the other world and in their sublime abstraction they have something of the impassive grandeur of the antique Egyptian. This Virgin, so different from the fourteenth-century Madonna on the door of the south transept, does not even look at the Infant which she holds in her arms. She is still as in the Byzantine Madonnas, the majestic symbol of the incarnation. In the arcade above the doors is the row of kings, her ancestors, the progenitors of her Son.

Any of the several guides for sale at the little bookstall in front of the cathedral will give all the facts that one can wish to know regarding the personages of the portail. Ruskin gives the essential points in a nutshell and contains an excellent plan besides.

The two lateral faces of the cathedral are magnificently rich in portrait sculpture. On the north side, besides the figures of the transept door, the piers which separate the chapels of the nave are ornamented with statues of personages contemporary with the building. They are all worthy of note, but that of Saint-Louis, which stands upon the second pier from the transept end, is especially remarkable as one of the oldest known portraits of the sovereign saint. With him stands Guillaume de Maçon, the bishop who built the fifth chapel in honour of the King, in 1302.

On the two faces of the double buttress which supports the north tower and on the pier separating the last two



chapels is a series of nine statues in three vertical rows. With the exception of one which is modern, these are of the greatest artistic merit. Portraits, admirably truthful, full of expression and powerfully executed, they count among the most important works of sculpture of the reign of Charles V. We may recognize in the first row, nearest the front, beginning at the top, the Virgin (the statue has been remade and is without artistic merit), Charles V and Bureau de la Rivière, a counsellor of his court. The statue of Charles is an extraordinarily lifelike portrait; the King wears his crown and holds his sceptre in both hands. His pose is simple and unassuming rather than majestic. The second group begins with John the Baptist at the top, under him the Dauphin Charles, afterwards Charles VI, and the Cardinal de la Grange, Bishop of Amiens from 1373 to 1375. This personage has special point here as he built these last two chapels on the north side of the nave. The upper figure of the third row, holding his head in his hands, is Saint-Fermin the Martyr, who brought Christianity to Amiens, and under him, the infamous Louis d'Orléans, second son of Charles V, and an unidentified personage.

Aside from the lively figure of Saint Christopher, with the Infant Jesus upon his shoulders, so prominently placed on the south side of the cathedral that no one could possibly fail to see it, the sculpture of this side of the building is over-shadowed by the magnificence of the *Porte de la Vierge Dorée*, which makes the entrance through the south transept. The presence of Saint Christopher here is because of a belief popular in the Middle Ages that he saved from sudden death those who looked upon his image. He figures very often upon the entrances to churches. If the figure has little merit as sculpture it is picturesquely vivid enough.

The Virgin holding the Infant, upon the pier of the door dedicated to her, enjoys a just celebrity. She is the exact opposite of the other Virgin, on the south door of the great façade, and offers a contrast in which one may read the whole difference in the Art of the two epochs. While the Virgin of the great portail is an essentially Frankish and

Norman one, done in the thirteenth-century manner, crowned, calm, full of power and tenderness, majestic and impassible, the queen in person, the golden Virgin of the south transept door is a divinity become human. Mary smiles at her Son. Her smile, which includes the visitor, and her informal way of standing, supporting the Child slightly upon her hip, become characteristic of the work of the fourteenth century. Three exquisitely graceful little angels hold a fluted nimbus behind her head—a pretty conceit of the sculptor which shows a certain laxity in the tradition.

The rest of the sculpture of this door is all earlier than the Virgin and much of it is contemporary with that of the great portail. Students of the Old Testament will have no difficulty in recognizing the subjects of the under side of the arch—Noah building the Ark, Isaac blessing Jacob, the Judgment of Solomon, Judith with the head of Holofernes, Jonah and the Whale, Daniel, Suzannah and the Elders, and the like. Delicately wrought and often charmingly picturesque, these little scenes are readily identified. The tympanum offers also a lively group of the twelve apostles conversing in pairs across its lower register. They contribute to the gaiety of the doorway by their animated attitudes, their easy movements, and their smiling faces which reflect nothing of divinity and in which their martyrdom is for once forgotten. Like the young care-free Virgin, they are perhaps a trifle colloquial, but after the immense solemnity of the great portail is it not permissible to think that even the Virgin and the apostles had moments of relaxation and were not always strung to the high pitch of their destiny? This Art which is in the spirit of the sculpture of the portail of Reims is essentially French, essentially Picardy. It shows the birth of a new type of beauty.

It may be asked why it is that Amiens happens to be the most perfect example of Gothic cathedral. The reason for its purity is very simple. It is rare in the rebuilding of the cathedrals that the whole of the earlier structure

was demolished : some part of the older cathedral was usually incorporated in the new, while some existing portion too worthy to be disregarded, often influenced by its presence the proportions of the whole building. A case in point is the south door of the west façade of Notre-Dame of Paris, which had belonged to the previous plan, and which the architect of the grander edifice found himself unable to discard, so much did he respect its beauty, but whose presence is, in a sense, a blemish in the perfection of this magnificent portail. The architect of Chartres encountered the same difficulty, and with all his powerful genius and originality found himself obliged to hold to the old façade which had not been destroyed by the fire.

In the case of Amiens the architect was embarrassed by no such historic legacy and, built rapidly, under one inspiration, the purity of his cathedral is unsullied by any souvenir of the Roman tradition, untainted by any Byzantine memory. The site had been cleared of all trace of the four cathedrals which had preceded it by what may be regarded, if one may say so, as a series of happy accidents. The immediate predecessor of the present building had been burned down literally to ashes two years before ground was broken for the new building. The land was quite clear ; there were no fragments or walls, no crypt or chapel whose preservation was demanded by sentiment or respect.

Amiens was the capital of the kingdom of Clovis, the first Merovingian King of France in whose reign was built the first cathedral on the present site. Clovis was an Arian who owed his conversion to Christianity to his wife, Clotilde. It happened in this way : Clovis was at war and in dire need of assistance, for his own gods had failed him signally. Being at his wits' end he decided to try the God in whom his consort had such faith and, very much in the spirit of the sailor who prayed to God, if there were a God, to save his soul if he had a soul, he made one of those compacts which are sometimes made with the Deity whereby certain promises are to be made good if certain prayers are answered. Clovis proposed to espouse

the new faith if Clotilde's God would give him victory over his enemies. He was victorious, recognized his success as an answer to his prayer and kept his word. This incident had a great effect upon his subjects and many of them were baptized with him. After the conversion of the Franks to Christianity it was not possible for them to be without a church, and one was accordingly built at Amiens. This first church and its successors were of wood. Little is known about them except that one was destroyed at the time of the Norman invasion, another burned in 1137, and that the immediate predecessor of the actual cathedral was consecrated in 1152.

It was during the time of the last of these buildings that the cathedral became possessed of a relic of great importance and one which was to exert an influence over the future of the church and of the city. This was the fore part of a skull, said to be that of John the Baptist. Whether one chooses to believe in the authenticity of such relics or not, the genuineness of this one was officially recognized by the See of Rome. It came to Amiens as a trophy from the Crusades, having been found in the ruins of an old palace in Constantinople, by Walon de Sarton, a canon of Saint Martin at Picquiny, who gave it to the Bishop of Amiens upon his return from the Holy Land. This relic, as may be imagined, attracted all eyes to Amiens, and the cathedral became, in consequence, the objective of a celebrated pilgrimage. If the story of how Walon de Sarton, who was an intrepid relic-hunter, got possession of the head is not particularly creditable to his sense of honesty, in the eyes of the faithful the end seems to have justified the means. He had already found what was reputed to be the head of Saint Christopher and an arm of Saint Elutherius, but these he had sent to Troyes, and now he found himself on his way back from the Holy Land empty handed. It so happened that he broke his journey at Constantinople and rested the night at a monastery in that place. This monastery had once been a palace. Although he was still in orders his tonsure had grown dur-

ing the time that he had been fighting and so he did not think it seemly to join the monks at their devotions, but prayed alone in a corridor without, making a special appeal to God, to be shown where some precious relic of a saint might be found.

Rising from his knees he saw an opening in the wall behind a grating and thinking that this was a likely place for a treasure to have been hidden, he bided his time until all was quiet and then made a thorough search. His investigations brought to light several important things, among which was a portion of a skull bearing a Greek inscription. This inscription identified the fragment as part of John the Baptist's head. Walon said nothing to the monks about his find, but carefully wrapping it up took it away with him. He presented it to Amiens and it was placed in the cathedral on the 17 December, 1206.

Although the Bible makes no mention of where the body of the saint was laid or of what became of the head after Herodias had received it from her daughter, tradition has preserved a fairly consecutive account of the whole affair, and this tradition is illustrated in some very fine carving in the interior of the cathedral, between the choir and the north aisle of the ambulatory. There we may see pictured the scene in which Herodias, as the story goes, seeing the head of her enemy before her, vented her spite by striking the forehead with a dagger, inflicting a wound upon the lifeless brow, to which a dent, visible in the relic, corresponds.

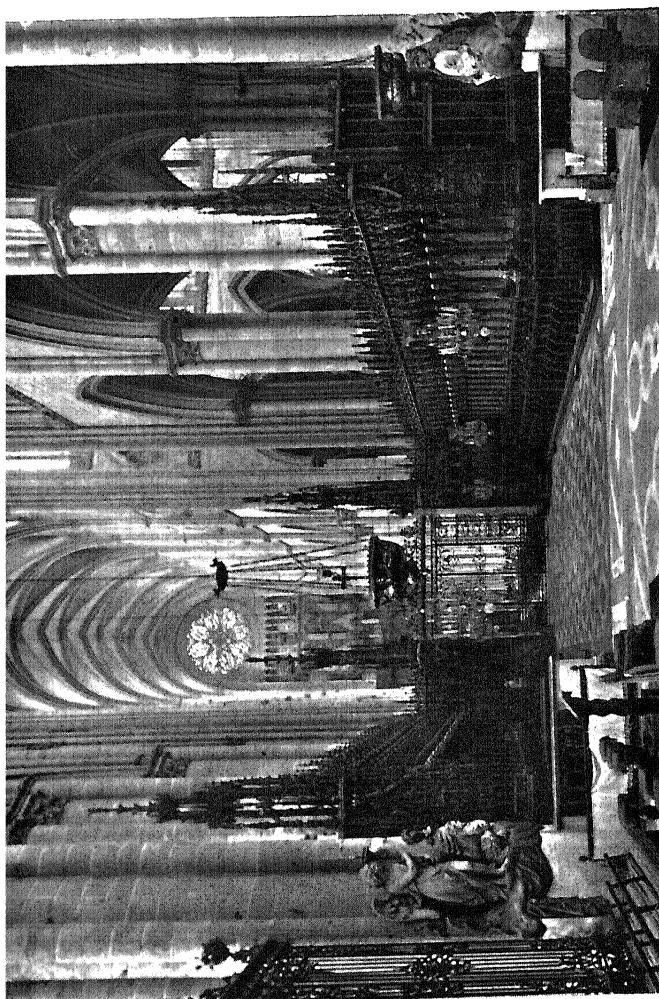
According to the tradition Herodias feared that if the head and body were laid in the same grave the saint might be restored to life, and so she kept the head, which was not until long afterwards buried in Herod's palace in Jerusalem. Here it lay forgotten for years, until in the fourth century some monks found it and recorded the discovery. Again it disappears for several hundred years, and its hiding-place is revealed to the abbot of a monastery, in a vision. It is traced from Jerusalem to Emesa in Phœnicia where, in 453, a head was seen said to have been John's; thence

to Comana, where it was taken, in 810, by monks who feared that it might fall into the hands of the Saracens. In 850 Ignatius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, was warned of its whereabouts in a dream, and it was brought back to Constantinople by order of the Emperor and placed in the monastery of Studius. The Emperor Alexis I, who reigned from 1081 to 1119, writes of it being at that time still at Constantinople.

Tradition says that the skull was intact until the time of Constantine X, when it was divided, and part was given to the monastery of Saint George in the Arsenal at Constantinople. In 1604 Clement VIII begged a portion, now preserved in the church of Saint John Lateran at Rome. The piece which Amiens retains is encased in a rich reliquary and exhibited at certain festivals of the saint—on the third Sunday in Advent and on the 24 June, his birthday, and for the octave following. Placed at these times upon the altar it draws crowds of pilgrims from all over the world.

A characteristic, which comes out strongly in the carving of the choir stalls, may be admired in the eight panels forming the enclosure of the choir on the north side. These tell the story of John the Baptist in vivid scenes in which the chief actors are costumed in the style of the period of their execution—the work is dated 1531. The Picards resisted or ignored the Italian influence which crept into French Art with the Renaissance. Like the choir stalls, these panels are of the Renaissance period, yet they remain frankly and wholly Gothic in spirit and execution, and are therefore of a piece with the architecture of the cathedral rather than decorations applied to it. This is one of the great superiorities of Amiens over Chartres. At Chartres the choir enclosure, though begun earlier than that of Amiens, is Renaissance in feeling, where it is not even later, as its execution extended over two centuries and its style changed with the times, and not being in sympathy with the architecture forms a sort of blemish upon it.

The cathedral of Amiens is particularly rich in portraiture of the people associated with its erection and history.



AMIENS  
THE NAVE SEEN FROM THE CHOIR





The nave encloses, between the pillars of its third bay, two monuments of extreme rarity. These are the bronze tombs of the Bishops Evrard de Fouilloy, who died in 1222, and Geoffroy d'Eu, his successor. Evrard de Fouilloy, a prelate of noble birth and high intelligence, was the bishop under whom the cathedral was begun. He himself laid the corner-stone. His effigy stretched upon a metal base, all cast in one piece, and supported by six lion cubs, is a most exquisite piece of sculpture, very rich in decoration. Both recumbent figures hold the attitude of benediction, and around the edge of each tomb is an inscription in leonine verse.

It was Ruskin's advice to anybody pressed for time at Amiens to spend the whole of his visit in the cathedral choir. 'Aisles and porches', he said, 'lancet windows and roses you can see elsewhere as well as here—but such carpenter's work you cannot. It is late, fully developed flamboyant, just past the fifteenth century, and has some Flemish stolidity mixed with the playing French fire of it; but wood-carving was the Picard's joy from his youth up, and, so far as I know, there is nothing else so beautiful cut out of the goodly trees of the world.'

This is high praise, yet it does not overstate the case. The stalls of Burgos may be richer, the stalls of Auch must not be forgotten, but nowhere in point of view of Art and finesse and unity are those of Amiens equalled. 'Sweet and young-grained wood it is: oak *trained* and chosen for such work, sound now as four hundred years since. Under the carver's hand it seems to cut like clay, to fold like silk, to grow like living branches, to leap like living flame. Canopy crowning canopy, pinnacle piercing pinnacle—it shoots and wreathes itself into an enchanted glade, inextricable, imperishable, fuller of leafage than any forest, and fuller of story than any book.' Its luxuriance, its mastery, seem to me to be more comparable to the similar decoration, though in stone, of the choir of Albi, which is, I think, as perfect and as consistent in style, than to any other.

If one should compare the choirs of Amiens, Albi, and Auch—all three being of extraordinary beauty and of about the same epoch and the most famous in France, it is to Amiens, in my opinion, that the palm of superiority must be given, on the ground of its perfect harmony with its surroundings as well as its pure Gothic character. The Renaissance movement, as has already been said, did not penetrate Picardy, which remained Gothic up to the reign of Louis XIII. The woodwork of the choir of Amiens, although not introduced until about two hundred and fifty years after the choir was finished, forms an integral part of its architecture. It develops from the structure of the choir in a way that is not true of the other churches. The stalls of Albi are complete, but they are very simple and the great beauty of this choir is in the carved stonework of the enclosure and rood-screen against which the wooden stalls are backed. Furthermore, this beautiful feature of Albi, together with the stone porch of that cathedral, stands obviously as an afterthought to a more severe composition.

Now, at Auch we see the most complete series of stalls of the beginning of the sixteenth century in France, and they are the best preserved. Carved of oak of exceptional quality, which by constant rubbing of canonical palms has assumed the colour and polish of cornelian, they form a series of Renaissance ornaments of the most charming character. Great bas-reliefs decorate the backs (which at Amiens are plain, though they were once studded with fleurs-de-lis) and arabesques, delicately carved, cover the elbow-rests and the other visible parts. But although executed in a space of about twenty years they offer specimens of two distinct styles. Where at Amiens all is equality, at Auch it is evident that the artist who carved the personages of the high backs and the pendants which support them was not so skilful as the carver of the foliage and mouldings, or if it was the same workman, he shows himself very sure when he treats the inanimate, but becomes uncertain of himself when he attempts the human form.

It would not have been possible for the artist of Auch to have carved the two great pinnacles of Amiens.

There is a unity in the choir of Amiens due partly perhaps to the speed with which the work was executed (though it was not done more quickly than the stalls of Auch) and partly to the fact that it was practically all done by two wood-carvers under the direction of a third and assisted by a fourth superior artist, known as a *tailleur d'ymages*—a figure-carver. We know their names: the master carpenters were Alexander Huet and Arnoult Boullon; the chief was Jean Turpin—he cut his name twice on the stalls, once upon an elbow-rest which represents a sculptor carving a statuette; and the figure-artist was Antoine Avernier. The full date of the start of the work, '3 juillet 1508', may be read upon another elbow-rest. The choir was finished on Saint John's Day, 1522.

These artists were above all faithful to the tradition of the Middle Ages and the subjects, whether they be drawn from the life of the Virgin or whether they depict 'Pharaoh's Dream', the story of 'Joseph and his Brethren', or 'Moses drawing Water from the Rock', are illustrated with utmost clarity and in the liveliest and most interesting manner. This merry company of wood-carvers drew their knowledge from familiar sources, and not the least of the charm of their work lies in its picturesque reference to the city's history: reference which has furnished a fund of material for the reconstruction of the manners, customs, costumes, and household furnishings of the ancient Amienois. On the stalls, for instance, is a scene in which the headsman, immediately after an execution, takes possession of the clothes of his victim—his perquisite; in another money-lenders ply their usurious trade. In a thousand ways have these honest craftsmen pictured the life and practices of their epoch.

The custodian who shows the choir of Amiens, Monsieur Eugène Régnaut, is a man of unusual culture, in a position too often left to the care of an ordinary sacristan. He has made a study of his subject, about which he is an

enthusiast, and he knows how to make it interesting to the groups which he conducts behind the beautiful eighteenth century *grille* which lightly veils the sanctuary. Monsieur Régnaut is much more than sacristan, though he serves the clergy in that capacity ; he is the official guardian of the beauties of the cathedral, appointed by the Minister of Beaux Arts, since Notre-Dame of Amiens is classed as an historic monument under the protection of the state. It is a pleasure to recommend visitors to this scholarly guide who makes the story of the stalls a vivid and living reality.

## CHAPTER V

### BEAUVAIS

**T**HE cathedral of Beauvais is one of the great curiosities of France. As one approaches the city from a distance the first thing seen is its enormous bulk, its singularly compact mass, and even one totally unacquainted with its odd history must be struck with its abbreviated aspect, must notice the absence of towers and spire and wonder what has become of these usual appurtenances of Gothic cathedrals in one classed among the famous. Whoever lists the cathedrals of France will think early of Beauvais, yet, since it lacks the obvious features of its kind, why is it so celebrated and what sort of façade can this be which does not include towers? A flèche may be struck by lightning, as indeed many have been, never to be rebuilt; a flèche may never have been achieved—there are many such cases—but towers are an essential part of a cathedral, are usually the strongest part of the edifice and sometimes stand upright long after the church itself has crumbled in decay.

As the town is entered from the south-east, the cathedral is seen for a moment looming above the picturesque houses of the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, camped atop the small dwellings of the tortuous Rue Feutrier; then it subsides behind them and must be approached by way of the Rue Saint-Pierre, which is fitting, for under the patronage of this saint was the cathedral placed. In Beauvais all the streets are old and narrow and many have houses the upper stories of which project over the sidewalk. Such narrowness and such projections make a further mystery of the cathedral which, for all its vastness, is tucked away so

securely against the former ramparts of the town that, as one turns into Saint Peter's Street, the eye is more taken by the twin, conical towers at the end of the vista, than by the fragment of the noble church which comes barely, if at all, into the picture.

As a vista, however, it is magnificently satisfying. The conical towers, medieval in construction, flank the gateway of what was formerly the bishop's palace, but which now gives entrance to the Palais de Justice. Just before the towers is the rich entrance to the cathedral, which we begin to perceive we have approached by the apse. Everything so far is perfectly in order. We have seen the great spring of the much vaunted choir, noted the gigantic reach of the flying buttresses, the double buttresses, which, standing well away from the apse with its slim, lancet windows, stay the prodigious walls of the choir, stretching fabulously long arms, and are now come to this most perfect specimen of flamboyant façade, this graceful, florid south portail, framed between elegant turrets, with arcades and niches and much lace-work in stone.

It is not until after one has entered the building by this door, the chief one, and marked the blank wall which appears to shut off the nave ; or after one has run around the corner beyond the projecting transept and seen the emptiness there, that the mystery of the absent towers is solved. There is no nave ! Here is a church most elaborately and sumptuously finished in all the details of its choir and transepts, but never carried beyond them ! And upon the ground where the nave should be is a strange little old Roman church—the so-called Basse-Œuvre.

The beginning of the nave, which as a matter of fact has been carried as far as its first bay, and which from the outside appears to be of the narrowest, is simply walled up with a covering of brick and slate enclosed between buttresses. Things are so much as they were left, in 1605, when all attempt to continue the church was abandoned, that one might expect at any moment to see workmen appear and go ahead with the construction so abruptly

terminated. Abortive, sinister, the great work stopped in full tide, as it were, arouses all one's curiosity. Here is briefly its history :

At the time of the great rebuilding of cathedrals throughout France, Beauvais, like Amiens, found itself disembarassed of its ancient cathedral by a great fire, or rather by two great fires, one in the year 1180 and the other in 1225, which between them reduced it totally to ruins. There remained, it is true, the primitive Carlovingian cathedral. This mother-church of Beauvais had sufficed the needs of the little city until about the middle of the tenth century when, the population having greatly grown, a vaster edifice was begun behind the apse of Notre-Dame-de-la-Basse-Œuvre, as the Roman church was called throughout the Middle Ages. This vaster edifice was called the Nouvelle-Œuvre and was dedicated to Saint Peter.

The new church was begun by the building of the choir, and its plan, had it been carried out, would have swallowed up the little Roman church. The latter was allowed to stand as a place of worship during the time that Saint-Pierre was in process of construction. Now although the building begun in the tenth century was upon a large scale, as compared with anything that Beauvais had seen before, it was as nothing in comparison with the work that began to spring up all over the north of France at the end of the twelfth century. The Bishop, Milon de Nanteuil, who was a very ambitious man, was so fired by the example of Reims and Laon and Amiens that he was already contemplating the destruction of the Nouvelle-Œuvre, in order to replace it by one which should surpass all others in height and grandeur, when it was providentially (as one might say) razed to the ground by the last of the two fires.

At this time, 1225, Amiens was five years under way, while other cities of the region had almost completed the work of reconstruction. The story goes that Robert de Luzarches, the architect of Amiens, furnished the plan for Beauvais, which followed closely the design of the former church. Armed with this document, the bishop and chapter

set about raising the necessary funds to realize it. They decided by common accord to give up, for a period of ten years, the tenth part of their revenues and to hold back for the same length of time the annates of all the benefices which should fall vacant in the diocese. These measures the Pope's legate approved in the year 1247. Beauvais was a small city and its inhabitants had not the riches of the Amienois; they were not able to pour out treasures into the coffers of the church. Neither had Beauvais any relic to compare with the head of John the Baptist to attract pilgrims to its shrine. The money was raised in other ways and there was not so much.

While Amiens commenced to construct its cathedral by the nave, in order to leave unmolested as long as possible the older church of Saint-Firmin, Beauvais, on the contrary, began its building at the choir. Robert de Luzarches therefore was able to profit by the experiences at Beauvais and to alter and improve the choir of Amiens accordingly. This was all to the advantage of Amiens, for although the choir of Beauvais, before the fourteenth century, was from all points of view a *chef d'œuvre*, the resources of the bishop and the chapter were but mediocre compared with those of Amiens and this poverty, coupled with the ambition of the builders, had disastrous results.

Never was the adage, 'Pride goeth before a fall', more truly proven than at Beauvais. The apse and choir, begun in 1247, were hardly finished before the vaulting, being carried on buttresses which were too weak to support its weight, crumpled and the roof fell down. It was rebuilt, only to collapse again owing to the too great spacing between the pillars as well as their own extraordinary slenderness and height. This second catastrophe occurred in 1284, and for forty years thereafter the cathedral had to be abandoned and services were again held in the little old Roman church.

The reparations were finally finished by about the year 1322, by Guillaume de Roye, master mason, and Aubert d'Aubigny, *apparailleur*, an occupation which corresponded



perhaps to that of interior decorator. Some of the work that they did is plainly visible and all of it is, naturally, detrimental to the original plan, which was all for a prodigious upward sweep with the lightest of support. Every alternate pillar of the choir is an addition introduced to share, with the original columns, the weight of the vaulting. The line of the first arch is still there and one can see plainly how it was modified to make two arches with the additional pillar dividing them. Some glass in the high windows recalls the termination of this work, under the episcopacy of Jean de Marigny. The arms of this bishop appear in a panel of the chancel, on the Gospel side, and the prelate himself figures, kneeling before Saint Peter, on one of the two windows which he offered, in 1324.

At the end of the fourteenth century only the choir was finished. The Hundred Years War, civil disturbances, epidemics, and general '*misères du temps*' put an end to all work and through most of the fifteenth century nothing was accomplished. Meanwhile the restoration of the choir did not end the troubles of this ill-starred cathedral. In 1500 the bishop, Louis Villiers de l'Isle Adam, the builder of the bishop's palace, placed the first stone of the south transept. Some celebrated architects collaborated in this design whose great importance was to protect the choir, which, standing isolated for so long a time, was threatened with ruin. Martin Chambiges, the celebrated architect of the transept of Sens and who had worked upon the Hôtel de Ville of Paris, was called upon and made the plans for the transept, while under his orders worked Jean Vast, whose name may be read upon one of the streets which lead to the cathedral.

Money was still scarce and amongst the devices for obtaining funds we read that from the year 1500 the bishop allowed those faithful of the diocese who contributed money for the Nouvelle-Œuvre to eat butter. This succeeded for a time, but by 1514 'charity had cooled' to such an extent that work would have had to be suspended had not François I come to the rescue with a curious

gift of *deux deniers obole tournois* in each hundredweight of salt sold from his reserves in Languedoc and Normandy. This royal gratuity amounted, in the year 1532, to four thousand and eighty-six *livres tournois*, a sum which was within nine hundred *livres* of the total amount expended in that year upon the church.

Meanwhile the Pope, Leo X, having been informed of the church's needs, accorded indulgence to all those who left alms in visiting the seven altars of the cathedral. This was called the *Grant Pardon général de pluinrière rémission*.

Martin Chambiges was greatly in demand, and the canons of Beauvais reproached him for his frequent absences. They obliged him to reside in Beauvais, fixed his earnings at twenty *livres* a year, with a daily allowance of four sous and a loaf of bread, and limited him to one month's leave of absence a year. The canons of Troyes were clamouring for him, but Beauvais paid no attention to their demands. Chambiges began to age and he implored the chapter to let his son, Pierre, assist him, but the canons were obdurate and refused on the grounds that Pierre was a drunkard and a *débauché* and should first mend his conduct. Jean Vast died in 1524 and was interred in the first bay of the nave in the chapel dedicated to Saint Peter and Saint Paul. His son, also Jean, succeeded him as first assistant to Chambiges. Eight years later Chambiges succumbed, and the canons, wishing to recognize his services and honour his memory, gave him a sepulchre in this place.

The north transept, whose foundations had been laid in 1510, after those of the south transept, was finished first, thanks to the liberality of François I, and this explains why the curious genealogical tree, whose branches intermingle with the architectural forms of the tympanum of the north portail, bears the emblems of this prince and the House of Valois. One sees the initial F, the salamander, François's device, the fleur-de-lis with the crown of France above it, together with dolphins, ermines, and marguerites. The King's captivity in Madrid interrupted his gifts to the

church ; but the canons, wishing to express to their unhappy sovereign their fidelity and gratitude, sold some of the jewels of the Treasure in order to contribute to the payment of his ransom. When François was set free he renewed his former gifts.

The north portail was finished in 1537, and this date is still discernible under the arch of the rose window. It was now a question of building the nave, or at least some part of it, as security for the choir and transepts. But again money lacked while luck seemed constantly against the enterprise. The Bishop, Charles Villiers de l'Isle Adam, nephew of the former prelate of this name, who had promised a large sum annually for the building fund, died soon after. His successor, the Cardinal Odet de Châtillon, in the hope of raising money, published far and wide throughout the diocese the Pope's decree of indulgence for those who, in visiting the seven altars of Saint-Pierre, left contributions. He also renewed the privilege of eating butter, cream and cheese in Lent to all those who were generous to the Nouvelle-Œuvre.

The bishops and canons of Beauvais were obsessed by the idea of a church which should break all former records for height. In spite of all the experiences of the choir they were still determined to tax the doubtful strength of their foundations by the erection of a steeple and spire that should exceed in height anything proposed by the rival churches of the epoch. With the money so painfully got together for so definite a purpose, they resolved, instead of prolonging the nave, of which one bay only had been completed, to build, upon the pillars which formed the cross of the transept, a sort of campanile of stone with a *flèche* of oak, the whole to rise four hundred and ninety-two feet above the paving of the cathedral.

To aid in financing this mad operation the canons were obliged to sell a great part of the silver of their Treasure and to borrow the sum of one thousand *livres* from several of their confrères. The superintendent of works was François Maréchal, but it was Jean Vast, his first assistant, and

not Maréchal, who was charged with the enterprise. This irregularity is not explained. Whether the good canons did not think their master workman capable or whether he feared an accident and refused to lend himself to this folly, it was Vast who built the campanile and upon whom rests the whole responsibility for what occurred.

In the autumn of the year 1569 this beautiful flèche was finished to the great joy of the canons, who now saw their cathedral crowned by a spire which surpassed anything which had been made up to this time. Its design was of utmost finesse and elegance. The base was of stone in three tiers, exquisitely carved, with many openings and much lace-work. A circle of sharp gables alternating with little steeples surrounded the base of the flèche, which was made of wood from the forest of Belle-Touffe belonging to the Bishop. It was surmounted by an iron cross. From the paving of the church the visitor could admire the inside of the three drums, posed one on top of the other, the first square and the others octagonal, and all three lighted by many fine windows. But the construction broke all the laws of stability and was doomed from the start. There had been cracks and repairs during its erection and throughout the whole of its brief career the canons were in a constant state of anxiety. Their records show nervous plans for diminishing the weight of the iron cross, for taking it down altogether, for continuing the nave and attaching the foundations of the pillars by a subterranean platform of stone, and many other schemes for strengthening the supports of this sublime folly.

It was all in vain. After a life of less than four years it tumbled down with terrible fracas on Ascension Day, 30 April, 1573. There had been an early celebration of mass in honour of the day and the clergy and congregation had barely got safely out, by the south door, and were forming a procession in the Rue Saint-Pierre, when the two columns nearest to the Basse-Œuvre gave way without preliminary warning. A third one then tottered, leaving all the weight upon the fourth, which in turn crumpled,

letting the flèche down into the church with a thundering crash. The vaulting of the north side fell in next, smashing a pillar of the choir. Windows were broken, the stalls damaged, the rood-screen, just finished, was wrecked, while a priest and a young clerk, who were saying mass in a chapel, were seriously injured.

The next day the canons assembled in the church of Saint-Nicolas, where they had hastily transported the Treasure and the manuscripts of their precious library, together with other valuables. A week later there was called a solemn conclave of all the master masons of Beauvais with the dean and three canons. It is noticeable that while François Maréchal was present, Jean Vast was not. These experts submitted that no repairs could be attempted until the unstable parts of the roof had been taken down, for great fragments had been torn loose by the weight dropped upon it and menaced imminent disaster.

This presented a real difficulty for there was no workman, neither mason, carpenter, nor anybody else, willing to risk his neck in such an adventure. The canons, benevolent and resourceful, rose to the occasion. It was no uncommon thing in those days for criminals to serve the purposes of science, of medicine, and different experiments of doubtful issue. There was a man languishing in the county jail who had been condemned to lose his head and, since his days in any case were numbered, they proposed to him a chance to win his pardon or to die in a useful cause. The man was willing and even eager for a test which held out even so much hope of life. The brave blackguard was brought out of prison and given over to the masons. These passed a rope under his armpits and attaching the other end to the loose beams of the shattered framework, suspended him amongst the rafters. Thus precariously supported, the hardy villain climbed up into the ruins of the campanile and, balancing himself as best he could, detached and threw down the weak parts, succeeding so well in his perilous task that he was pardoned and set free.

The Bishop and canons paid dearly for their pride and folly. The damage was estimated at forty-six thousand *livres* and only three thousand remained in the coffers of the church. They sacrificed the jewels of the Treasure, but that too was only a drop in the bucket. The Bishop came nobly to the rescue and sold his Paris house. This brought thirty thousand *livres*, and in addition to this he gave from his private forests all the necessary timber. The King augmented this latter gift by ten acres of wood from the royal forests. The canons, not to be outdone, made touching sacrifices such as were within their power: they gave up their harmoniums to the nuns of a neighbouring convent and sold their next two years' crops of wheat in advance. This, together with a large sum of money borrowed from wealthy citizens of Beauvais, financed the repairs and five years' toil and anxiety wiped out the effects of the disaster.

But now the Treasure was exhausted and the Bishop and canons were faced with new trouble in the religious wars of the end of the sixteenth century. The violent struggle between the Catholics and the Protestants so pre-occupied France that they could no longer hope to find resources for the building of the great nave with the magnificent portail, of which they and their predecessors had dreamed so long. Their case received its final blow when their Bishop, Odet de Coligny, embraced the reformed religion. In 1605 the west end was simply closed up and all thought of finishing the cathedral was definitely abandoned.

Theoretically so well conceived and drawn by a man of genius, the choir, even as altered, is still marvellously *svelte*. If the doubling of the pillars destroyed in a measure the prodigious effect intended, the height and slenderness of the sanctuary are such as to take the breath away. There is a moment of extraordinary exhilaration, of physical shock, when, just as one steps inside the door, the vertiginous spring of the vaulting breaks upon the view. No anticipation can prepare one for the immensity of effect. 'There are few rocks, even among the Alps', says

Ruskin, in his *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 'that have a clear vertical fall as high as the choir of Beauvais.' Nothing higher was ever attempted before and after this triumph of religious expression Gothic architecture had only to decline and architects fell back upon detail for effect.

Among the beautiful things to be seen at Beauvais is the tomb of the Cardinal Forbin-Janson, bishop of the diocese, by Nicolas Coustou, a fine work of the early eighteenth century. The cathedral possesses numerous and remarkable tapestries of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, made by the local manufactory. The doors, sculptured by Jean Le Pot, are magnificent specimens of Renaissance wood-carving: they have resisted valiantly the hand of time, but all the sculpture of the niches, the central pier and the colossal statues of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, which formerly stood upon the two gables, have been destroyed.

The chapels which radiate from the ambulatory are rich in charming glass of the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, though the cathedral has always been counted as secondary in this respect to the church of Saint-Etienne, of Beauvais, whose glass is better known and more easily seen. The most celebrated window of the cathedral is to be found in the Virgin's Chapel. It illustrates the Miracle of Theophilus, a very favourite subject with designers of this time, and of the miracles attributed to the Virgin the one almost invariably chosen for illustration. It figures twice at Paris; we find it in a mutilated window at Chartres; while it is recounted at length in windows at Laon, Troyes, and Le Mans. The miracle is dramatic and has a certain resemblance to the story of Faust. It is of Oriental origin, but came early to the West and was put into verse and became a 'Mystery'. Finally in the eleventh century it was incorporated into the Liturgy and at the Virgin's office one chanted:

'Tu mater es misericordiæ  
De Lacu fœcis et miseriæ  
Theophilum reformans gratiæ.'

Visitors to Beauvais will not be allowed to miss the astronomical clock which forms one of the curiosities of the interior. The sacristan shows it off with especial pride as it is almost his whole bag of tricks. It was made by a local clock-maker in 1886, after the model of the clock at Strasbourg. The oldest chiming clock known in France is also here. It stands against the wall near the Coustou statue. This charming fourteenth-century clock has a beautiful chime of bells which play quaint tunes every hour. Should one have the luck to be inside the cathedral at noon, one could not fail to notice and perhaps wonder at the trumpeting and cock-crowing which proceeds from the chapel accompanied by the melodious chiming of the ancient clock.

If one has only a day to spare for Beauvais the cathedral will occupy most of what is left of it after the time consumed in arriving and departing and in lunching rather well, at the Hôtel de France et d'Angleterre, which is the most important hostelry. If it is a fine day one may take coffee or a tea of sorts on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville in one of the numerous cafés and recall, while imbibing the fragrant beverage, the story of that vigorous young woman with the flag who occupies the centre of the Place. A few years ago considerable interest in her history was revived by the production of a film called *The Miracle of the Workers*. Beauvais objected rather fiercely to this film, which it was said falsified somewhat the events of the siege of Beauvais and the dramatic part played by Jeanne Laisné, or Jeanne Hachette, as she is usually called. The objections were sustained and the film was modified accordingly.

It was in 1433 when Charles, Duke of Burgundy, attacked the town with an army of more than eighty thousand men that Jeanne Hachette made herself famous. The city, though poorly fortified, defended itself valiantly. At the first alarm few soldiers were found upon the ramparts, but the women of Beauvais came to the rescue and seconded the besieged, contributing greatly to the success of the defence. Amongst these women was our heroine. When,



in the assault, a Burgundian had planted his banner on the wall at the site of the Porte de Bresles, Jeanne rushed to the spot, tore the banner from his hands, and ran with it to her parish church. The siege was raised in less than a month, Charles of Burgundy having lost over three thousand men. Louis XI liberally rewarded the inhabitants, according them many privileges in gratitude for their resistance. The hostile banner hung upon a pillar of the church of the Jacobins until 1704. A fragment of it is still preserved in the Hôtel de Ville.

## CHAPTER VI

### SENLIS

IT would be a thousand pities to pass by Senlis without devoting a few hours to wandering about this charming little city and to contemplating from a variety of vantage points the beautiful *fleche* of its cathedral. Senlis is the nearest cathedral town to Paris and its sights may be conveniently combined with those of Chantilly, its very near neighbour. One may take a moderately early train to Chantilly in the morning, see the incomparable *Musée Condé*, lunch comfortably at the *Hôtel d'Angleterre*, proceed to Senlis in plenty of time to make an exhaustive visit there, including a leisurely tea at the *Hôtel du Nord*, and be back in Paris in time for a late dinner in the evening.

Owing to its importance in Roman times Senlis, although now side-tracked from the main line of the Northern Railway, which 'bifurcates' at Chantilly on behalf of Senlis and Crépy-en-Valois, is most conveniently situated with regard to roads, and motorists will find it on the direct routes from Paris to Meaux, to Soissons, to Beauvais, to Amiens, etc., as it lies at the junction of these important thoroughfares. Before the day of steam engines Senlis did a flourishing business in numerous manufactures, owing to its accessibility to Paris and these adjacent towns, but the railroad left it to one side and so killed its industry, though this very fact has maintained it in the more serene possession of its ancient attractiveness.

The Roman city lay in the quarter situated at the summit of the hill upon which the modern town is built. It formed an oval, circumscribed by the *Place de la Halle*, the *Rue Saint-Hilaire*, the *Rue aux Flagards*, the *Rue de*

Chat-Haret, the Place Saint-Maurice, the Rue du Puits-Tiphaine, and the Rue aux Fromages. The city wall, garnished with twenty-eight towers, passed behind the apse of the church of Saint-Frambourg and the cathedral and followed the line of the château.

Senlis was one of the smallest cities of Gaul. Its surface was less than fifteen acres and its circumference not much more than half a mile around. Its enclosure is so well marked that one may follow it throughout most of its length, finding traces in gardens, in courtyards, and above all behind Notre-Dame and along the line of the ancient château which was built over the residence of the Roman governors. The walls were about twenty-two feet high and twelve feet thick, built of seven or eight layers of huge stones, taken from ancient monuments, laid dry, while above this base the material is rubble mixed with lime and mortar. Though such towers as remain are mostly in ruins, some interesting parts are well preserved, and amongst these are the towers of the bishop's palace, behind the apse of the cathedral, and those of the château. These towers were circular and rose several stories above the top of the wall. One may trace distinctly the round coping of the windows which admitted light into the bishop's chapel, installed in the tower of his palace in the Middle Ages.

The walls dated from about the middle of the third century, and were erected hastily as a defence against the incursions of the Barbarians who ravaged Gaul and pillaged everything in their path. In the foundations of the walls were found numerous fragments of ancient monuments that had been fired no doubt by the Barbarians, and these fragments, covered with sculpture and inscriptions, yielded much information to archæologists concerning the Art and social history of France in remoter times. They form now a precious nucleus of the archæological museum of Senlis. These ancient fortifications protected the city against the assaults of the Norman pirates, against the pillage of the army of Othon, and later from the inroads of the Flemish. But Senlis outgrew its walls, and under Louis XI, in the

fifteenth century, they were replaced by new ramparts, chiefly to the south and east.

We get picturesque views of the cathedral and the old walls, or what remains of them, from the promenade which encircles the city. This beautiful boulevard, taken from near the station on the north side, follows along the ruined walls to the Roman amphitheatre, one of the very special sights of Senlis. We visited it without a guide in the dusk of a perfect February day, straying across a green, pathless field and through a loosely fastened gate into a lane which runs casually between kitchen gardens. Another gate at the end of the lane shuts off the ancient entrance to the arena, which slopes down between Roman walls into the grass-grown oval. Little has been done to reconstruct this antiquity, yet all its features are recognizable. We made them out in the twilight, which lent perhaps a certain poetry to the scene.

We learned that the existence of this highly interesting souvenir of the Romans in Gaul had been unsuspected until after the middle of the last century. In the year 1864, when scholars had begun to wake up throughout this part of France, it occurred to some of the members of the Archæological Society of Senlis that there was something curious in the circular form of a piece of meadow lying at the gates of the city towards the west and not far from the road to Creil. Their suspicions were strengthened by the name of an old fountain in this locality which had always been known as the *fons arenarum*. It was decided to investigate, and after some cautious digging the foundations of an ancient construction were uncovered, disclosing an ellipse measuring one hundred and thirty-seven by one hundred and fourteen feet, hollowed out of the side of the hill. Everything was there: the grand entrance, formerly vaulted, the two chambers, one covered with flat paving stones, the other vaulted and destined no doubt to the gladiators. Near the entrance were the two stairways giving access to the *podium*. Opposite was the other entrance, likewise fitted with two chambers and stairways.

We peered down into this extraordinary relic from the top until the waning light forced us to retreat and we continued our circuit of the ancient town.

The way led now through old streets with picturesque vistas, in which the *flèche* of the cathedral made from time to time the culminating note of a charming composition of Roman walls, ancient houses, ruined churches, and forked streets. The arrow of the cathedral points so high that one seldom loses sight of it in Senlis. Less lofty than the *flèche* of Beauvais, it still reaches the respectable height of two hundred and fifty-six feet, and being a *chef d'œuvre* of lightness and audacity, very slender and straight, and pointed in all its parts, it seems much lighter, especially in comparison with the south side of the church, which is the one usually approached.

We so approached it, coming direct upon the full southern façade which shows at a glance the composite style of a monument built at several epochs. Although the *flèche* is contemporary neither with the south nor the west façades, it belongs properly to the construction of the latter. The west face is simple and severe. One of the earliest parts of the building, it was erected from 1154 to 1190. Unlike many façades, it has but one great door, in the centre, while the other two openings are quite small. Unfortunately the sculpture of the chief door suffered greatly during the Revolution, when many of the heads were broken and the reliefs defaced. In spite of the restored heads, however, the eight figures of the entrance are of considerable interest and beauty. Whereas in many cathedrals we have a middle door dedicated to the Saviour, upon which a central figure of the Messiah is supported by the twelve apostles, at Senlis there is no pier and the statues represent personages of the Old Testament.

The inside figure on the left is John the Baptist, easily recognized for his hairy coat ; he baptizes the Gentile at his feet. The second is Samuel, holding the sacrificial lamb ; the third is Moses ; and the fourth, Abraham, who has seized Isaac by the hair and is prepared to immolate

him but for the intervention of the angel who stays his knife. On the other side, beginning with the figure nearest the door we have David, holding the three nails with which Jesus was fastened to the Cross ; Isaiah, with the flowering branch of Jesse's Tree ; Jeremiah, carrying the cross ; and Simeon with the infant Jesus in his arms. Upon the lintel of the doorway are two panels representing the death and resurrection of the Virgin, while above, in the tympanum, is the coronation. Some secular subjects, charmingly done, increase the interest of this doorway. They include a calendar with a small panel for each month of the year, rudely fashioned in high relief and full of amusing detail.

The façade is beautifully symmetrical until it reaches the story from which, on the south side, the tower is continued to support the *flèche*. Up to this point everything balances, but as the southern tower develops beyond its twin, it departs from its square form with elegance and grace, disguising its change from square to octagonal full as cleverly as Laon, which has been so highly praised. The alteration is made by the simple expedient of cutting off the corners of the square and, to make the transition less abrupt, four little turrets, one at each corner, supported by slender pillars and covered with sharp, pointed roofs, give great lightness to the construction. It is above this point again that the *flèche* begins to point, first its group of narrow dormer windows covered with gables, like darts of stone, and finally its great arrow of stone laid like the scales of a fish and foliated throughout its length.

Whether it is seen from the distant vantage points—clearings in the forests of Chantilly and Halette—or examined from its base, the *flèche* of Senlis inevitably strikes one as a masterpiece of construction and design. It has borrowed something, certainly, from earlier spires : from the elder *flèche* of Chartres, than which it is more ornate ; from the old steeple of Saint-Denis ; from the little village spires of Normandy. Yet in the beauty of its lines, the elegance of its openings, its daring lightness, its excessive up-pointing, it has an originality all its own

which has made it the admiration of centuries. The spire is unquestionably the great feature of the cathedral. We shall scarcely see its equal throughout the whole of France, and when it is considered what this slim and elegant construction has weathered in fires, in storms, in wars ; from the normal winds, rains, snows, and sleet which have beaten upon its sides for seven centuries, the wonder is that among so many that have been destroyed this particular spire should have resisted. The most remarkable of its escapes was during the great War, for Senlis was occupied from the 2 September, the eve of the Battle of the Marne, until the ninth of the same month, and the cathedral itself was hit by more than fifty bombs.

If there is nothing at Senlis to compete with the fame of its beautiful steeple, the interior of the cathedral offers, nevertheless, a few interesting parts, especially in the remains of the earliest constructions, which date from the latter part of the twelfth century. It was in 1153 that Bishop Thibaut, with the aid of Louis VII, undertook to rebuild the old Roman church, then falling in ruins. Owing to the presence of the royal château of Senlis, to which the kings of France made frequent visits, the cathedral project was warmly supported by the sovereign, and through him by the bishops of the neighbouring dioceses. The work, however, proceeded slowly, and while the canons were absent on one of those begging expeditions common enough in the twelfth century as a means of raising funds, Thibaut died. To counteract the effects of this disaster the popes, in 1160 and 1182, interested themselves in the new building, while Thibaut's successors, Henri and Geoffroy, devoted the greater part of their revenues to the work. The choir was finished about the year 1180. Four years later the unhappy Isabelle de Hainaut, Philippe-Auguste's abandoned queen, took refuge in the almost completed building. Finally, in 1191, the cathedral was dedicated in the presence of the Archbishop of Reims and the bishops of Soissons, Laon, Noyon, Meaux, and Geoffroy, of Senlis.

If the cathedral, both within and without, presents to-day a great confusion of styles it is because of the terrible fires of the Middle Ages which ravaged so many churches. Senlis suffered many such accidents and each succeeding century brought its restorations and its changes.

The interior gains a certain character from the fact that its floor is somewhat lower than the surface of the outside pavement. We descend in entering by several steps. A striking peculiarity also is the inequality of the sizes of the bays of the nave, while the galleries of the choir and nave form one of the chief beauties of the interior. Vast and well lighted, by large round-arched windows, these galleries, perhaps the most beautiful as well as the oldest of the region, for they belong to the twelfth-century construction, are a derivative of Norman architecture. From the height of the transept or from the rounded part of the choir they afford many picturesque vistas.

The most ancient window of Notre-Dame is to be found above the centre of the apse. It comes probably from the priory of Saint-Nicolas and represents the saint saving three little children. A large thirteenth-century window in two panels gives light to the chapel dedicated to Saint Catherine. In the Chapel of Saint-Louis is a statue of the king found in 1846 in the cemetery of Saint-Rieul, where it had been hidden during the Revolution. This statue, made apparently shortly after the death of the monarch, shows the subject standing, his head bare, clothed in a long robe tied at the waist by a cord and wearing the royal mantle, seeded with fleurs-de-lis. He holds in his right hand his flowering sceptre and his left grasps the crown of thorns. His feet are bare. Unhappily the head has neither character nor expression.

The floor of the cathedral was once covered with fine tombs, but of these there remain but a few fragments in the side aisles, and on these the carving is almost effaced.

The visitor to Senlis will not fail to be struck with the uncommonly modern and attractive railway station with its comfortable appointments. When the enemy quitted



the city, after the Battle of the Marne, the order was to burn the town, and all the old buildings which bordered the Rue de la République were fired. The station, like so many others in this section, was completely gutted by fire. Apart from this innovation, however, the city has now so thoroughly recaptured its pristine order and peacefulness that one can scarcely realize how great was the damage nor how much was destroyed.

For Senlis retains much of its fourteenth-century aspect. An ancient description, written by Jean de Jandun, who lived at the beginning of that century, is still sufficiently exact to suggest the present city :

‘ In the midst of high trees, set far enough apart to let the sky be seen ’, it runs, ‘ and under which one gathers strawberries, mulberries, and filberts, rises the city ; orchards laden with fruits, fields covered with flowers, where flow the waters of a limpid spring, separate the houses from the forest : the wines are exquisite, the fish abundant ; the sober inhabitants feed on milk, butter, and cheese, never on spiced sauces. The houses are not of plaster but of stone and of a stone which is hard and resisting ; the cellars are deep and cool ; the paved city clean, without mud, is visited by moderate winds. There is but one disadvantage : frogs make such a noise that they prevent from sleeping the brave folk who live upon the banks of the Nonette.’

Of this description only the vineyards are missing, and the deep cool cellars no longer shelter those wines which the ancient chronicler found exquisite. For the rest, the same forests surround Senlis on all sides ; the same orchards are traversed by the same river ; the same tortuous streets are bordered by the same houses.

Much of the early history of France is associated with Senlis. The Merovingians knew it and it was a favourite residence of the kings of the second race. Charlemagne loved the great woods and made it the centre of his hunts. After the death of the last Carolingian, in the forest of Chantilly, Hugh Capet was made king in the royal palace,

by the Archbishop Adalbéron. The first Capetians, Louis VI, Louis VII, Philippe-Auguste, and Saint-Louis greatly enriched the cathedral and the many other churches.

Senlis knew Joan of Arc when, the city having fallen under the dominion of the English, she flew to its aid in 1429; and at the time of the League the city remained faithful to the crown and Henri IV proclaimed the admirable conduct of the inhabitants.

## CHAPTER VII

### LAON

**E**VEN if Laon were not possessed of a very remarkable cathedral it would still be a city curious enough to merit the attention of travellers. The surrounding country is exceedingly flat, which sets off the more effectively the isolated ridge which, rising abruptly some four hundred feet above the extensive plain, forms the base of the ancient town. Perched upon this rock the venerable city looks about her. Her range is long, extending many miles around : from her ramparts she sees beyond Saint-Quentin far into Belgium on the north ; westward to the forests of Saint-Gobain ; and southward over the wooded hills of the Laonnais and the Soissonnais, ancient divisions of the Ile-de-France and Picardy, now included in the *département* of the Aisne.

Evangelized in the third century and the seat of a bishop since the time of Clovis, Laon has scarcely changed in appearance since the days when Charlemagne made it his capital. It is a current saying that Charles the Simple would recognize it were he to return to earth and that his courtiers would readily find their way about—which is as much as to say that it has not altered much since the early days of the tenth century. But Laon, confined by the limits of her narrow plateau, has no room for expansion and development, and the decisions taken by her first builders could not easily be modified. So the distribution of the general features is the same as when the city was first laid out. The cathedral stands just where the primitive church was built over a temple raised to the Roman divinities and the Gallic gods ; the citadel has not moved ;

and for centuries the city has seen the noon sun shine on the *Cuve de Saint-Vincent*, the great bowl or vat, hollowed out of the hill-side, and disappear behind the forests which limit its horizon.

From the railway, which sets us down at a station in the plain below and to the north of the city, a straight stairway of several hundred steps—two hundred and sixty-five to be exact—done in groups alternated with strips of inclined plane—leads to the gate of the town and all driveways connecting Laon with the surrounding country are cut in zigzags on the steep slopes. There is an electric tram which makes the journey to the top in a few minutes, and Laon is justly proud of her *Pont Supérieur* which connects the lower village with the city on the heights; but who would not prefer to mount by the rude, historic stairs in the ancient manner? The effort is enlivened by the magnificence of the view, which increases in extent as each stage of the ascent is gained and as one leaves farther and farther behind the sense of modern life which moves below in a singularly irritated and grossly active patch, where railway lines converge and multiply; where a dozen restless locomotives shift futilely about over a complex pattern of steel rails, emitting strident and melancholy shrieks of warning; where a tuft of smoking factory chimneys bears witness to a thousand commercial interests and preoccupations unrelated to our quest.

The ramparts are represented by fine, wide promenades following the curious shape of the plateau—a sort of distorted, angular crescent—but the thirteenth-century gates of Ardon, Chenizelles, and Soissons, the latter in a state of dilapidation, have been preserved and add greatly to the picturesqueness of the town. We penetrate quietly, inconspicuously, under cover of old walls. The high town is like a necropolis. The tram goes clanking by and deposits its handful of commercial travellers before the *Hôtel de Ville*, but Laon, wrapped in the dream of its glorious past, pays no attention.

In the centre only the *Grand' rue* is animated: all the

business of the city is on show along this narrow pavement. The shops are adaptations : old houses with sharp gables, a few large hotels, some rare modern houses shoulder one another. For centuries, always, this has been the chief artery of Laon, its Fifth Avenue, its Bond Street, and at its two ends are the dominating features of the plateau—the cathedral and the collegiate church of Saint-Martin. Commerce flows between these two extremes ; all the actual life of Laon is here, as in the past all activity was along this thoroughfare. At the eastern extremity, behind the cathedral, is the citadel ; at its apex is the parade ground of Saint-Martin ; while at the southern end of the crescent stands the ancient abbey of Saint-Vincent.

This last is opposite the city proper and across the deep depression, the *Cuve*, between the arms of the ridge. Over the slopes of this great hollow bowl Laon spreads out her orchards, her vineyards, her kitchen gardens, her artichoke and asparagus beds, exposing them to the full warmth of the southern skies, and these industries, which have been hers since time immemorial, harmonize with her past and explain not a little her strength and independence. In times of stress Laon could draw from her *Cuve* all necessary alimentation, while much of her population could retire into the numerous cave dwellings concealed in its sides. And this great treasure was accessible to the outer world by but one opening, towards the east.

Between the two great churches, on the site of the present Hôtel de Ville, was formerly the royal palace, which up to the end of the Carolingian dynasty played a great rôle. At this epoch Laon was to all intents and purposes the capital of the kingdom. Charles the Simple made it his official residence and the chief city of his realm. Louis d'Outremer was crowned here in 936 and established his court at Laon. And when war split the possessions of these monarchs into fragments, Laon became the last stronghold of Charlemagne's race. 'When there was no more France there was still Laon.' After the decline of the Carolingians Laon ceased to be the king's residence

and lost some of its importance, but Robert the Pious was crowned here in 996 and Philippe I in 1060.

The hilly district has always had some strategic importance. In the time of Caesar there was a Gallic village where the Remi, as the inhabitants of the country around Reims were called, met the onset of the confederated Belgæ. Laon it is said replaces the ancient Bibrax, of which Caesar speaks. It was originally only a château: the Romans fortified it and it successively checked the invasions of the Franks, the Burgundians, the Vandals, the Alani, and the Huns.

Saint-Remi, the illustrious bishop who baptized Clovis, was a native of the Laonnais, and when the progress of Christianity obliged him to dismember his vast diocese he made Laon a bishopric, using for its foundation some of the wealth that he had received from Clovis, in 498. The church was greatly enriched by gifts of numerous domains by Charles the Bald, and the bishopric became so powerful that when Hugh Capet was declared King of France he was only recognized in Laon by the connivance of the bishop, who in return for this service was made the second ecclesiastical power of the realm.

As for the history of the cathedral itself, its foundations date back to the origin of Christianity in Gaul. When Saint-Beat, the apostle to Laon, came to town he established a chapel to the Virgin in a subterranean grotto of the mountain where the faithful assembled to worship and pray to the true God in security. Over the site of this chapel, which may be regarded as one of the earliest temples to the Virgin, the first cathedral was raised. All this is noted in the earliest references to the church and, curiously enough, there still exists, under the eastern end of the edifice, a small chamber of irregular form which may have been the chapel of which tradition speaks.

Aside from this curious fact little enough has been set down concerning the predecessors of the great church. The earliest document which speaks of the primitive cathedral is one which describes its destruction. It was

at the time that Laon became a commune under the domination of its notorious Bishop Gaudri, whom the inhabitants had every reason to hate and to fear. He was in Rome getting absolution from the Pope for a murder in which he had been implicated when the people, taking advantage of his absence, secured from his representatives a communal charter. When Gaudri came back, just before Easter in the year 1112, he countermarched the people's move by inviting Louis VI to come to Laon to celebrate the Easter fêtes. The King arrived on Holy Thursday, Gaudri purchased the revocation of the charter from him, and when the sovereign departed on Good Friday, renewed his oppressions.

Now the communists rose in insurrection against their seigneur and set fire to the house of the treasurer of the chapter by way of reprisal; but they succeeded better than they hoped, for the Bishop's palace, too, burned down, and the fire being so well started gained the cathedral itself, which was close by, and still hung with the Easter draperies.

It was a terrible and memorable affair. The exposed timbers of the roof caught fire, for this was before the days of vaulting, and the flames were so violent that they melted the gold of the altar, several reliquaries and shrines, as well as reducing to a molten mass a crucifix of great price encrusted with precious stones. The episcopal palace, the canons' dwellings, more than ten churches near the cathedral and many other buildings were swallowed up in this holocaust which just missed destroying the whole city. In the *mêlée* the Bishop and several of his partisans were put to death.

Uneasy at the results of their victory the rioters went into hiding outside the walls of the town, which was pillaged and sacked anew by the people of the neighbourhood, eager to avenge the death of their Bishop. The King, who had encouraged the communes as a check upon the power of the nobles, tried to keep in with both parties and favoured sometimes the Bishop and sometimes the people in the

disputes which followed, for the charter was always a bone of contention during the coming century.

Meanwhile the status of the Bishop did not suffer. In the year 1332 he was Duke of Laon and one of the twelve peers of France, in which capacity he carried, up to the time of the Revolution, the *Sainte-Ampoule* at the coronation of the king. The *Sainte-Ampoule* was the sacred vase containing the inexhaustible oil for anointing the kings of France. According to tradition it had been brought to Saint-Remi from heaven by a dove for the baptism of Clovis, in 496. Neither Grégoire of Tours nor any of the other historians, including Saint-Remi himself, speaks of this miracle. It is first mentioned in the writings of Hincmar, Archbishop of Reims, in the ninth century. In 1793 the *conventionnel* Rühl broke up the relic with a hammer on the Place Publique at Reims.

It is always an interesting question where the money was found to build these great cathedrals. One is apt to say that labour was for nothing in those days and that the piety of the people was so great that they poured out their treasure without stint for the glorification of God and religion. This is only part of the truth and, as amply seen in the case of Beauvais, the canons were often hard put to it to find the necessary money, for the cost of erections of such magnitude was enormous.

But Laon was resourceful. Small and confined as she was she had never been behindhand when it was a question of building a church or founding a monastery. She had money in the coffers of her *bourgeois*, stones in the quarries of her hill, oxen in the plains below to drag them up the slopes. She was called the Holy City, a name well deserved for she built upon her narrow crescent sixty-three churches, of which several were magnificent.

When the excitement occasioned by the burning of the cathedral and the sack of the city had subsided the good canons bestirred themselves to rebuild their church. The occasion was exceptional, many of the *bourgeois* having lost heavily in this affair of the fire, not much could be



expected from them in contributions, so seven canons, accompanied by several lay members of the community, set forth to beg from the faithful in other parts. How the treasure, or rather the chief treasures of the sanctuary came to be saved one does not know, but the canons took with them 'a piece of the Virgin's robe, a fragment of the True Cross, and a bit of the sacred Sponge' which they exhibited in the processions which they made through Buzançais, in the Indre, Issoudon, Tours, Angers, Le Mans, and Chartres, and the passage of the relics was attended by the performance of many miracles. Two cripples from the vicinity of Châteauroux, miraculously cured, returned with the party and were employed as workmen upon the cathedral.

The work went forward briskly during the autumn and winter of 1112, but in the spring the canons were obliged depart again with their relics, and this time made a long pilgrimage through the south of England, hoping great things from a country so prosperous and so favourable to the Gothic movement. They visited Nestles, Arras, and Saint-Omer before embarking at Wissant, a little port on the outskirts of Calais. Crossing the Channel was a great undertaking in these early days and not unattended with danger. The canons were attacked by pirates, robbed by some Flemish drapers, whose affairs took them to England, but they finally landed at Dover and made an extensive round, visiting Canterbury, Winchester, Christchurch, Salisbury, Wilton, Exeter, and Bristol, and, after an absence of seven months, they brought back enough money to finish the building. It was consecrated in 1114.

So much for the predecessors of the existing cathedral. The last of these, built with so much enthusiasm and devotion by the worthy canons, appears to have stood only about fifty years. One may imagine that a cathedral executed in two years' time could not have been of a size and character to compete favourably with those vast edifices of the new order that were springing up at Noyon,

at Beauvais, at Amiens, at Reims. Laon had at the time a powerful Bishop in Gautier de Mortagne (1155-1174) who contributed from his own revenues for the re-erection of the church in scale with the rival dioceses.

Height was above all things the ambition of the Gothic builders, and was not Laon by its natural situation specially endowed by Providence with the means of eclipsing her competitors? Were not her foundations as high or higher than the spires of the greatest of her rivals? Her vast edifice should begin to rise up at the altitude at which others left off. The Laonnais were a bold, enterprising, and ambitious people, full of ideas of war and independence. Their cathedral reflects their temperament and character. Viewed from afar it might be a fortress rather than a church. The Bishop planted it on the highest part of the plateau, he made it more commanding by means of great towers, and on those towers he planned to raise spires, to double the height of the hill, to make as much for God as God had made for Laon, to reach as near to heaven as was humanly possible. For centuries the people put their work and their economies into this prodigious undertaking. They laid up their treasure, if not actually in heaven, as near to it as was within their power.

A mass of stone about four hundred feet long by sixty-five feet wide and one hundred and thirty feet high, under the lantern, serves as a base for four open-work towers which are from two hundred to two hundred and fifty feet in height. This proud construction made the base and support for the flèche, the hymn in stone, which flew towards the skies and told from afar of the pride and faith of the city. Springing from the right-hand tower of the great portail it rose over four hundred feet above the soil of the plateau, the plateau itself being at about that same distance above the level of the plain. This flèche did not survive the Revolution, but even so the towers are visible for miles around and on fine days can be seen from Cassel in Flanders, fifty leagues from Laon.

Already magnificent in towers the cathedral lacks two of

the number originally intended. Only four are completed to the base of the proposed spires, the two at the west end and one at each end of the transept, where the plan called for two. For some reason, probably financial, the last two were never carried out. Lack of resources, too, may have influenced the builders in failing to add the other three spires to the existing towers, though it is more probable that they were afraid to charge further the foundations, none too strong for the weight they already carried. A square central tower built over the cross forms a lantern and is one of the great beauties of the church as well as one of its curiosities, for lanterns were rare in Gothic edifices outside of Normandy and the Rhineland.

The most striking thing as we approach the cathedral from the tortuous *Grand' rue* and debouch upon the parvis is its regularity of design. The magnificent façade, with its three exceptionally deep-set porches, ranks next to Notre-Dame of Paris for purity of style. As the sun strikes it, or the moon, the depth of the porches under their circular arches is revealed in handsome contrasts of bright light and dense shadow. The windows above, too, the great rose and the two lancets, are set within deep circular depressions which repeat the design of the doors under them, and the gallery which forms the third storey again has unusual depth. The result is a strong, noble façade, less regular, more varied than Paris, not so ornate as Amiens, rugged and powerful in its expression.

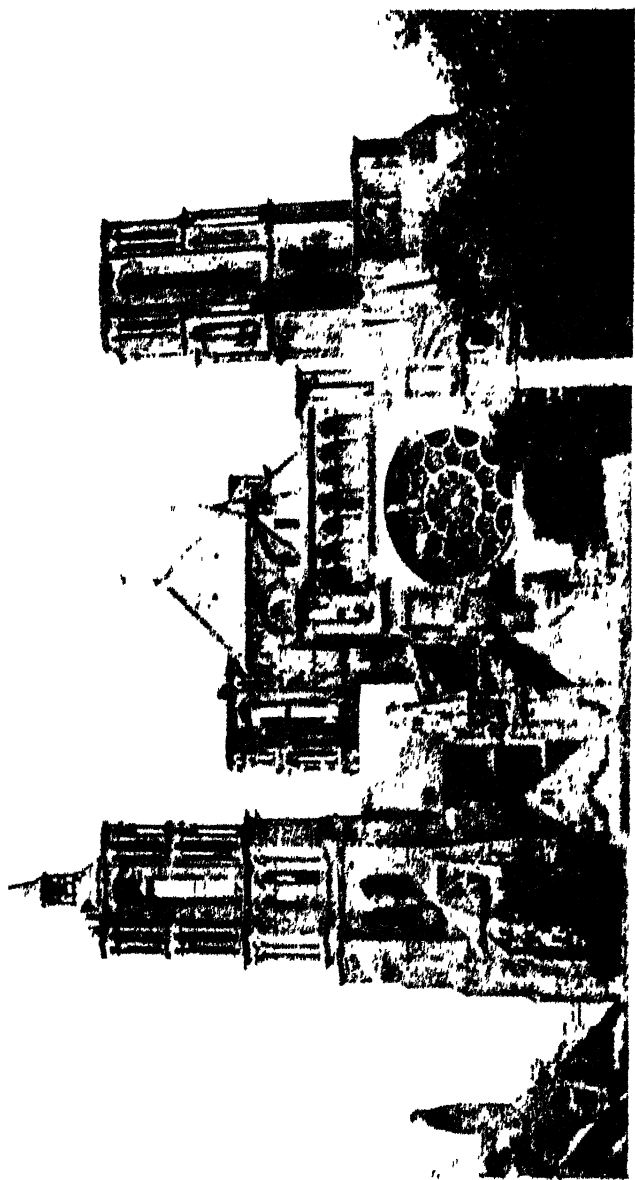
However it is not the façade, but the towers of Laon which are 'the thing'. Their originality struck a celebrated architect of the thirteenth century, a certain Villard de Honnecourt, who sketched them in his album with this annotation: '*J'ai esté en mult de tières si com vus pores trouver en cest livre: en aucun liu, onques tel tor ne vis come est celle de Loon.*' (I have been in many places as you may see by this book: never anywhere have I seen towers like these of Laon.) Up to the height of the belfries they are square, but at that stage they pass to octagonal, and one of the great beauties of their construction is the cleverness

with which the builder has masked this change so that one is hardly aware of it. The point is really worth noticing. Just above the belfry storey are square turrets supported by slender columns placed against the flat sides of the octagons, and these form supports again for polygonal turrets which rise to the top where the base of the intended flèche is surrounded by a balustrade. The eye, thus engaged and distracted, takes no note of the structural change in the form of the tower itself.

Every one will have heard, I suppose, of the colossal oxen which stand upon the towers looking out over the plain. There are sixteen of them, eight on each of the two front towers and tradition says that these savage statues were put there to immortalize the memory of the indefatigable brutes who during so many years dragged the stones for the cathedral to the summit of the acropolis. A legend told by Gilbert de Nogent seems to uphold the local tradition. He says that one day one of the beasts who was dragging a chariot full of material up the incline of the mountain fell in his tracks, overcome by fatigue. The driver was unable to go on when another ox appeared suddenly and presented himself to be attached. In this way the dray was drawn to the summit. The task finished the animal disappeared as mysteriously as he had come. After this the people could not think without emotion of the valiant brutes who had worked like real Christians upon the cathedral.

Their heads, singularly life-like, stand out in strong silhouette between the columns of the upper turrets, and this human touch in the austerity of the architecture brings us close to the thirteenth-century workmen, naïve, if you like, but admirable certainly in their desire to immortalize the dumb creatures without whose assistance they would have been powerless. The oxen of Laon are an exception to the rule of cathedral sculpture. Everywhere else artists produced animals with no other thought than to render the church a miniature world.

There is, however, or there was to us perhaps I should





say, a distinct feeling of disillusion when on mounting the towers with the kindly custodian we found that these beasts are only half oxen—they are like the commerce of Laon, all *en façade*, they have no hinder parts! Like Baron Munchausen's horse they appear to have been cut in half, and the kindly custodian made on this score one of those inevitable jests, which I shall not repeat. Whatever inconvenience may be avoided by their incompleteness, however, I may say, is more than made up for by the presence of innumerable rooks and pigeons living in these towers and whose litter was abundant everywhere in the perilous heights. One could not but wish that these too had been deprived of their dangerous quarters.

The interior of the cathedral is exceptionally clear and open, an effect due to its square apse, a feature rare in France, but occurring in churches of this diocese and attributed to the influence of an English bishop who held the see in the twelfth century. A handsome view of the interior in all its extent is obtainable from the organ loft, and it is entertaining to walk around the upper storey, through the wide gallery of the nave. The windows contain some good glass and amongst other admirable features are the elegant Renaissance fronts enclosing the lateral chapels. These are real *chefs d'œuvres* of stone carving. Each chapel is entered by a beautifully sculptured door. The extremely rich and varied decoration of these screens comprises caryatides, sheathed figures, garlands of flowers and fruits, antique medallions, masks, birds, cherubs' heads, figurines, arabesques, etc. The whole was originally relieved with gold and colour.

When the Constitutional Assembly decided to break up the old provinces of France into administrative *départements* some fragments of Picardy, Thiérache, Champagne, and the Ile-de-France were taken and these odd components formed a *département* of bizarre form to which was given the name of the most beautiful of the rivers flowing through it, the Aisne. Laon, the old royal city, the ancient capital of the Carolingians, was made the chief town in recognition

of the priority which it had always exercised over the region.

Long ago tamed and domesticated Laon had returned to the authority of her sovereign and since the fourteenth century had formed a submissive part of the royal domain. Her bishopric was one of the first ducal peerages of the realm, and this honour, all that remained of her former glories, sufficed. Under the royal wing, in times of peace, her old religious tendencies revived. She had covered her narrow island with a forest of churches and steeples; numerous and powerful monasteries and convents were installed on the plateau, on the hill-side, in the suburbs, and the surrounding villages. These, enriched by pious donations and by centuries of economy, had acquired almost all of the plain encircling the city, extending far into the surrounding country wherever there were harvests to glean and tithes to collect. The monks, however, were good fellows, easy going in affairs, contented with long term leases indefinitely renewed and with low taxes. They were educated, useful, considerate of the poor, and spent their riches in building poor houses and hospitals and in bettering the condition of the people.

When the Revolution broke up these vast domains, however, nobody was sorry. The abbeys, already weakened by the spirit of the century, put up a mild defence and were easily overthrown. Often their abbots or their monks themselves took the initiative and voluntarily accepted the new ideas; and as, on the other hand, there were few nobles in the region the struggle was neither long nor violent. According to the archives of the province the history of the Revolution in Laon was above all one of fêtes, federations, processions, patriotic banquets, oratorical effusions, and the like. The transition from the old régime to the new was made insensibly and the city, having installed her new public offices in the buildings left vacant by the exodus of the monks, had only to continue her monotonous existence.



Nevertheless the cathedral suffered cruelly at the hands of the Revolutionists. Their first measure was to close it to the cult and to plant a wheat market in the sacred precincts. Later it became a Temple of Reason, and an order to suppress all that could recall the 'tyranny and fanaticism' of a fallen régime and the alteration of the edifice for philosophic fêtes gave the vandals a free hand and they completely upset the church, breaking the statues, beheading the saints, and violating the ecclesiastical tombs. Finally the episcopal chair, dating from the fifth century, which had rendered its bishops sovereigns and governors of the city and whose power had raised its prelates to the greatest eminence, was abolished in 1790. Degraded henceforth from its rank as cathedral it remains to-day but a simple parochial church attached to the diocese of Soissons.

During the War the enemy occupied Laon for forty-nine months, and the city was frequently bombarded in 1917-1918, many houses being more or less damaged. The occupation, however, saved the cathedral. Though it had been for a time a stable for six hundred horses, it came through almost unscathed. Its bells, however, were taken down, melted, and used as bullets.

The charmingly situated Hôtel de l'Ecu offers a delicious lunch to exhausted sightseers, and its dining-room commands a glorious sweep of country, looking towards Soissons and Reims across the plain. At first it seemed that there were no homeless wanderers like ourselves in Laon, upon the day that we devoted to its attractions, for although the streets emptied themselves promptly as the new bells of the cathedral announced the noon hour, and although all the handles were taken off the shop doors in true provincial style, there seemed to be no corresponding activity in such hotels as we saw, and even the chief café of the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville was void of *apéritif* drinkers. When, however, we stumbled by instinct upon the Hôtel de l'Ecu we found all the commercial travellers there, crowding the tables and partaking of the host's cheer with evident satis-

faction. I remember a wine—Château Margaux, 1919—with which some very knowing table companions regaled themselves with so much gusto that we were tempted to try it. One cannot really do better, I fancy, at Laon.

## CHAPTER VIII

### REIMS

I CANNOT trust myself to write much of Reims. It was not my privilege to see the royal cathedral before the War. My first sight of it was in the summer of 1923, when very little had been done to clean up after the disaster. There was at this time a tiny portion which had been restored and which was entered by the Virgin's Door : here faith was struggling to maintain foothold. We were also allowed to enter by the front and stand before a barricade which shut off the whole of the nave, with the exception of this small preface, and to look our fill at the terrible desolation of the roofless ruin. Its floor was still piled with the débris of its gashed and shattered beauties, a pulverized mass of stone pounded to nothingness by the repeated blows of over two hundred and eighty-seven recorded shells, besides all those which struck the building during the violent bombardments of the spring of 1917 and 1918. These had annihilated the vaulting, ruined the towers, broken the windows, and burned the pulpit and stalls. . . . Only the great pillars of the nave stood firm.

All the surroundings were lamentable : all Reims was one great heap of demolished dwellings, wrecked public buildings. The walls of the Hôtel de Ville, a fine example of Louis XIII architecture, stood a charred shell before a bleak interior open to the sky, and, crossing the Place Royale, one may even yet look through the gaping windows of the great buildings which were gutted here. The archbishop's palace, with most of its rich collections, was burned to the ground and of it nothing remained but the immense fireplace of the Salle de Tau, upon which, by a

curious accident, the Latin device was still readable : ' Goo faith maintained enriches.' Great piles of rubbish obstructed the streets. Small souvenir shops had camped in barracks on the edge of the Parvis—the ' terrestrial Paradise ' ! From here also charabancs started for ' tours o the Battlefields '—Reims was making what it could of it horrors, like cripples who show their stumps to inspire charity. As though to intensify our trouble a man with no legs was trundling himself cheerfully about in a wheel chair selling postcards of ' before and after ' and making the best of his lot with a courage that wrung the heart. People were pottering vaguely amongst the desolation o dead streets, and children too young ever to have known a world other than this, and unaware of anything wrong with this one, were playing contentedly with treasures dug out of the rubbish heaps.

From far away the gaunt and terrible aspect of the cathedral was one of the most moving sights ever seen. I have been twice in the last year, but it seems to me that nothing will ever take away that first impression. Great pieces had been torn away from the towers ; the left one presented jagged lines and blurred edges where the flames had caused the surface of the stone to split and fly off. Gables stood unsupported by the roof, which had melted and run away—I have seen photographs of the lead pouring through the mouths of the gargoyles—where it had not been blasted out by bombs and cast into the suffering nave. Through the great rose of the west portail shone the serene sky of a remote heaven. All this appeared across heaps o bricks and stone and mortar and lengths of twisted iron broken crockery, rusted kitchen utensils, and formless masses of the elements of human habitations, blighted and defiled and stamped out of existence.

As evening fell the shadows lent a sort of grace to the shattered cathedral, enveloping its scars in a tender light, veiling the rents and gashes and voids and revealing the still superb silhouette of its potent mass. Four years of incessant shelling had not succeeded in exterminating the

essential magnificence of the great portal, of the soul of this incomparable monument of French genius. I was to think of this again, on a recent visit. Statues of the saints and angels, fixed to the sides of the north tower, and others, that were defaced by shells and still await restoration, all their surface split off, headless, armless, only a halo or the mark of one left, perhaps, still compel admiration, still hold to the very last vestige a spark of the divine fire that conceived them. Rodin used to say that if there was anything more beautiful than a beautiful thing it was the ruin of a beautiful thing. He had not then seen the ruin of Reims! Deliberate, wanton ruin does not put one in the mood for paradox—yet there is grandeur in the thought that hell itself could not deprive Reims of its majesty; that the scar left behind the wrenched-off angel, the decapitated saint, has eloquence and beauty; that the mutilated Christ on the north door still moves us as no restoration could, and still calls forth in the face of Saint Paul, who looks at his Redeemer from his place on the right, the divine reflection and exaltation of the spiritual essence which transcends death and baffles destruction.

'She is there, motionless, mute; I cannot see her; black night', Rodin wrote many years ago.<sup>1</sup> 'My eyes grow accustomed, I distinguish a little, and it is the great skeleton of all France of the Middle Ages which appears to me.' Impregnated with piety and historic souvenirs, this cathedral was all the past to the French nation. Who had not sung its praises? Charles VIII proclaimed it 'noble among all the churches of his kingdom', and a native poet, at the time of Louis XIII, put it above the seven wonders of the world. In more modern times, Fergusson, the great Scottish authority, thought the west façade 'the most beautiful structure produced by the Middle Ages', and that nothing could exceed 'the majesty of its deeply recessed portals, the beauty of the rose window that surmounts them, or the elegance of the gallery that completes the façade and serves as a basement to the light

<sup>1</sup> *Les Cathédrales de France.*

and graceful towers that crown the composition'. Its portail was so beautiful, so lavishly wrought with superb and symbolic sculpture—there were about five hundred and thirty statues—that no draperies were hung upon it for the coronation ceremonies, for it was thought that nothing could exceed the sumptuousness of the stone itself, with its imagery, its personages, its arabesques, its roses, great and small, and the elegance of its towers, as a background for these solemn fêtes. As for Reims herself :

' Il n'est cité que je préfère à Reims  
C'est l'ornement et l'honneur de la France',

wrote La Fontaine.

Being crowned at Reims was a patent of royalty. Every king of the French crowned at Reims was at once a Frenchman by birth and the undisputed heir of the founder of his dynasty, from the great Merovingians to Charles X, the last of the Bourbons and the last crowned king. Hugh Capet and his son Robert, neither born to royalty, were crowned, one at Noyon and the other at Orléans. Henri IV, the one king whose right was disputed, was crowned at Chartres. It was this which made the church sacred among all others, as it was this which made it the target of targets to the enemy. In striking the Reims cathedral one struck the living roots of the nation, the supreme symbol of the nation itself. Its portail bore the scene in sculpture which recalled the baptism of Clovis, the Arian, after he had embraced Christianity. Up there, just under the point of the gable, you may see him between Saint Remi, who baptized him here in the year 496, and Clotilde, his wife, who converted him to her faith.

Later his sons were anointed in this place, in one of the early basilicas on the site of the pagan temple which Saint-Nicaise had dedicated to Mary in 401, five years before the Vandals beheaded him before his own cathedral. After the baptism of Clovis, Reims became the sacred city and upon the coronation of each king the cathedral was the scene of resplendent ceremonies, of dazzling cortèges, of

processions in which the crown, the sword, and the sceptre were paraded with pompous display to be conferred upon the king who, anointed by the bishop of Reims, became the hope of thousands of subjects and upon whom, kneeling before the bishop, the jewelled light pouring through the Gothic windows, seemed to concentrate its rays.

The most famous of these coronations was that of Charles VII. At the moment of his anointment Joan of Arc threw herself upon her knees, kissed his feet, and shedding hot tears said: '*O gentil roi maintenant est fait plaisir à Dieu qui voulait que je fasse lever le siège d'Orléans et que je vous amenasse en votre cité de Reims recevoir votre Saint-Sacre, montrant que vous êtes vrai roi et qu'à vous doit appartenir la couronne de France.*'<sup>1</sup>

The prerogatives attached to the see from the origin of the church rendered the archbishops powerful: first they were counts, with the right to mint money; then they had authority from the pope to crown kings; and in 1179 Louis VII himself regulated the ceremonial of coronation and raised the countship to a duchy and made the bishop one of the peers of the realm.

Every detail of the church spoke for its royal character. The high windows of the nave contained a series of portraits of the kings of France. An inscription named one of them 'Karolus'. Each king was accompanied by the bishop who crowned him. These twenty solemn monarchs were indistinguishable one from another. They were in the church to recall the belief that royalty is a divine essence and that a king anointed with the sacred oil is more than a man. The curious statuettes sculptured around the great rose of the façade completed the instruction. One saw David consecrated by Samuel, and Solomon anointed by Nathan. The scenes which followed were destined to suggest that if God raises kings above all men He expects of them the highest virtues: He asks them to be courageous—David kills Goliath; to be just—Solomon renders the child to his mother; to be pious—Solomon builds the

<sup>1</sup> Michelet: *Jeanne d'Arc*.

Temple. At the summit of the north portail appears the figure of God blessing the kings.

Few monuments showed at the same time so much grandeur and simplicity, few showed so much power and grace. Few again possessed the unity, the symmetry, which were its essential characteristics. Its façade had the harmony of Notre-Dame of Paris without its severity; the grace and charm of Amiens perfected and reduced to order and balance; the strength and depth of Laon, embellished, transfigured. Reims alone of all façades has perfection, it expresses no effort but joy. By way of unusual beautification the tympanums of the doors of the great portail were filled, not with stone reliefs, but with roses of the most exquisite design in pure thirteenth-century glass. Over the arches of the deeply recessed doors, the gables, ornamented with sculptured scenes, blended the features of the façade together, whereas at Paris all is rigidly separated.

The kings, ancestors of the Virgin, in the guise of the kings of France, which at Paris occupy a restricted band over the doors, are here of more individual importance. Placed in their canopied niches, at the point at which the towers take their departure in the grand façade, they are not all upon the same plane, for they follow the surface, raised at intervals by the intrusion of a buttress, and they turn the corners, making a tour of the towers. About three times the height of a tall man, these kingly figures suffered greatly in the bombardments. Two that stood in the yard of the cathedral, having been taken down for restoration, were completely blown to pieces by a shell. Others were frightfully damaged. It is plain from the street below which are old and which new by the colour of the stone. The old stone is warm and soft, the new hard and grey. Some of the figures have been half made over, others have been refaced, while others again have been replaced by modern copies.

It is useless to dwell upon the horrors of the War, but at Reims we are in the perpetual presence of one of its most brutal results. Aside from the incessant and deliberate



bombing of the cathedral without military excuse, for, contrary to the assertions of the enemy commander, its towers were not used as posts of observation,<sup>1</sup> two great fires contributed to its worst destruction. The first of these was caused by a bomb setting alight a scaffolding which completely surrounded the north tower, for at the time that War was declared Reims was in the act of making some repairs to this tower. The scaffolding burned fiercely, destroying a great number of statues in this region as well as defacing the surface of the portail itself, as is still very noticeable. The second fire was occasioned by the straw which had been put into the nave to provide bedding for the wounded Germans. The roof took fire from a bomb striking it and the flames falling into the nave through the hole made by the bomb set fire to the straw. If the first fire despoiled the north tower, the second completely ruined the nave and choir. The Archbishop's throne, the coronation carpet, the stalls, the pulpit, the priceless glass, which melted in place or fell crashing and splintering into the interior, as the heat of the flames expanded its framework, and the innumerable other treasures of a rich interior, were all swept away or reduced to cinders on the spot. Of the worst and most irreparable damage was the despoliation of the reverse side of the elaborately sculptured western portail, unique of its kind.

In the vast blankness of the renovated interior there is little at present to recall the splendours which were annihilated by the War. The great rose, which occupies all the width of the nave at its western end, was the *chef-d'œuvre* of Bernard de Soissons. The fire of the 19 September, 1914, ruined it, as the flames destroyed that great series of portraits of kings and bishops already referred to. The rose which you see is a restoration, made so far as was possible of pieces of ancient glass. The elderly sacristan, with whom recently I had a long conversation, was one of

<sup>1</sup> We have this on the authority of Monseigneur Maurice Landrieux, who with the Cardinal Archbishop remained at Reims throughout the duration of the War.

the few faithful who stuck it out during the whole of the war. He told me how, after a bombardment, he and his colleague used to go about with baskets gathering up the fragments which had fallen and carrying them to a place of comparative safety.

The small roses over the eight restored windows of the nave are old, all the rest of these windows is modern. How these came to be saved is interesting. It was in 1918 that, some of the glass in the upper parts of the windows of the nave being still intact, the clergy conceived the daring scheme of trying to rescue them. It was useless to think of raising scaffoldings in order to take them out as that would have served as a pretext for a renewal of the bombardments, for the time subsided. A small group of firemen from Paris, assisted by two stained-glass workers, were got together from amongst the soldiers and these, under cover of fog and before daylight, climbed up into the iron armatures of the windows and at vertiginous heights accomplished the task of dismounting the fragments with remarkable cleverness and courage.

The Treasure, it may be mentioned, was saved during the progress of the fire of the 19 September, 1914, by Monsieur Landrieux, *cure* of the cathedral, and Monsieur l'Abbé Thinot, at the risk of their lives. The magnificent tapestries, a series which begins with the genealogical tree of Jesse and relates the chief events in the Life of the Virgin, were sent to the Gobelins at Paris and kept there throughout the War. Now hung in the Museum of Reims where their beauty may be enjoyed by everybody, they used to adorn the walls of the nave on fête days and during coronation ceremonies.

It may be wondered how it was that the great statues of the doors of the west portail were not more injured. These doors were protected by great banks of sand bags fixed securely against them, which completely covered the magnificent figures. Nevertheless, before there had been time to take this precaution, much injury had been done. A fragment of one of the first shells struck the lower lip of

the Angel Gabriel, known as the 'smile of Reims', and the expression of this delicate face, the finest and most life-like of all, was marred. The head and arms were afterwards knocked off, while fire defaced the drapery of this figure and scaled off the whole front of the robe of Saint-Nicaise, whom the angel accompanies. There are photographs which show very well the state of these two statues before restoration. The pieces of Gabriel's head were found and the angel was put together again, but the smile is not the same.

The sculpture of these doors is of incomparable beauty. It is only at Reims that are found such superb groups as that of the *Annunciation* and the *Visitation*, on the right of the central door, and the *Purification* on the left-hand side. The Virgin and Saint Elisabeth might be two antique statues, so marvellous are the attitudes, so wonderful the draperies, recalling those of the *Fates* in the British Museum. What simple, expressive beauty in the scene of the *Purification*, in which Mary presents the Infant to the priest of the Temple, who holds a cloth to receive the precious burden! What character in the figure who stands beside Mary! What grace in the woman who looks on beside Saint Simeon! And the Virgin of the central pier, with her radiant face; how proud she stands with Jesus upon her arm! Rodin has a word for her: 'She is the real French woman, the provincial, the beautiful plant of our own garden.'

It is some small consolation to know that the group in the left-hand gable was a restoration before the War, and that the one in the right-hand gable was already much damaged, though that damage was greatly increased by the bombardments. These fragments, broken in places like the marbles of the British Museum, were comparable in every way to the Greek sculpture. The Christ on the Cross was a nineteenth-century restoration without artistic value.

At first glance, after all that one has heard and read of the injuries to Reims, it seems, among so many upright

figures, that the wreckage is less complete than had been anticipated. But as the monument is studied the sum total of harm mounts to a formidable figure. For, in spite of the marvels that have already been accomplished in intelligent restoration, by the best of French sculptors, assisted by the numerous casts and photographs of the originals preserved at the Trocadéro, heads are gone, hands, feet (feet especially) are lacking throughout this great page of medieval Art. Everywhere are ugly patches where shells have burst, where projectiles have hit, striking off a fragment of drapery, a knee, a nose, a cheek. . . . An angel has been snatched off here, the head of a Christ there, a halo, a group, a king has been blown to atoms. It is malicious, devilish, ruthless, useless, too sad and dreadful to dwell upon—yet there it is. One remembers the years of agony, the devoted clergy, the patient population, of whom two thousand quiet civilians were killed.

The expression of Saint Paul's face (on the Judgment Door of the north façade), as he stands steadfast beside his headless Saviour, begins to take on a curious significance. His face is lifted with a divine look of unalterable faith and noble endurance. One examines him: he has lost two fingers, all of his toes, his garments bear traces of the *abus*—he is still sublime. These brutalities have not affected the piety of his attitude nor marred the soul that speaks from those eyes in the lifted head. Saint Andrew has a lettered nimbus: it is almost intact. Beside him, opposite Saint Paul, is a fine, vigorous Saint Peter, with the crisply curled hair and beard of the tradition. He holds fast to the keys. Only Peter, Paul, and Andrew have preserved their haloes. Saint John stands on the outer line of the doorway, opposite a saint whose head is gone. All six faces look at Christ, upon the central pier. I should say five but that the attitude of the headless sixth is towards Christ and one knows that he looked at the Master. The Christ has cruelly suffered. His head is gone, one hand, that one which was raised in benediction, is missing; the fingers of the other, holding the globe, are nicked at the knuckles;

the garments are badly battered, while behind Him the wall is scarred where shots went wide. The exquisite imagery of this door, so spirited and beautiful, is battered and defaced. Of the little souls which angels are bringing to Abraham's bosom, only one has preserved himself entire.

Two angels who hold the nimbus over the neck of the beheaded Saint-Nicaise, Reim's early martyr, have themselves lost their heads and the crown has been broken. The saint's head, in his hands, is intact. The statue of the pontif in the middle of this central door passes for Saint-Sixte, the first Bishop of Reims. The small door to the right of the centre is Roman and its tympanum, a relic of the cathedral built by Archbishop Samson, represents the Virgin in Majesty. This door, which formerly connected the cathedral with its cloister, now enters that chapel which was first opened for service after the War. On the other side, in the gable, over the south transept, a shell has blasted off two of the angels that bear Mary aloft in a charming *Assumption*. This, though late sculpture, is a beautiful thing.

A wondering saint on the right-hand door of the great portail has suffered the indignity of a smashed nose. He bears it like a true martyr and stands unflinching and full of faith. It is of this door, I am sure, that Rodin speaks in one of the most moving passages of his beautiful book. The scene is outside the cathedral at night: '*Ces gardiens de l'ombre, sur la porte, pour toujours, ces grands témoins, cette garde d'honneur sur trois rangs—par quatre, par six, par dix, ces saints: on dirait des ressuscités, debout dans leurs tombeaux. Je sens palpiter autour de ces étranges figures une âme qui n'est pas de chez nous. Quelle terrible énigme elles me proposent! Elles ont une formidable intensité religieuse. Peut-être attendent-elles quelque grave événement: elles se concertent. Elles ne sont plus du temps qui les vit sculpter, leur aspect change sans cesse. . .*'

Reims is in a state of active reparation that promises completion in twenty years. In company with the *Amis des Cathédrales* I made a recent inspection of the work,

personally conducted by the architect of the restoration. We were shown a large temporary museum in which every fragment of sculpture and stone carving that is found in the débris is preserved and studied. We saw the ruined choir, shut off by provisional walls from the nave where services are now held, and we mounted high into the gable and there saw the new method employed in reconstructing the roof. In place of the magnificent timbers, oak from the royal forests, destroyed in the fires which consumed the interior, all is now armed cement, specially constructed in curved lengths, bolted together, an impregnable support. Reims has been brought up-to-date. The roof is Mr. Rockefeller's gift to the stricken cathedral.

## CHAPTER IX

### STRASBOURG

**N**OTRE-DAME of Strasbourg surprises by its colour, which is that of the gates of heaven, and by its extraordinary height ; while it profits enormously in visibility from its location on the island enclosed by the arm of the Ill, which contains the heart of the capital of Alsace. Slim and pink and very tall, with the most elegant of slender spires, it stands out boldly in the landscape as the city is approached by rail or motor ; and as we walk along the charming promenades which follow the banks of the river, or cross the forty little bridges which connect the newer city with the old, we are constantly constrained to pause in our business or our pleasure to admire the view of the cathedral. The historic monument, indeed, seems never to tire of posing in attractive compositions of antiquated streets, picturesque quays, and fairy-book houses, with fabulous roofs, high-pitched and fitted with tiny dormer windows, so characteristic of the city. One expects every moment to see a flock of storks settle over the chimney-pots, bearing in their beaks fat babies to bring joy to the cheerful inhabitants.

It may be as Gothic, as ' French ', as you please, yet we feel before this cathedral, as we feel indeed all the time in Strasbourg, that we are in a foreign country, a country, that is to say, foreign to France. Alsace, in common with Belgium or Holland or Denmark, has tremendous, concentrated personality. It is to be regretted that all the people do not wear the costume—I saw it only once during a visit of several days—for it seems to be essentially part and parcel of this slightly, to our eyes, burlesqued life, which

is all medieval, if not operatic. There is something hearty, honest, full-bodied, highly flavoured, individual in this country which the nations that have possessed it have quite failed to absorb. 'Let them quarrel over me', it seems to say, 'I go my way.' It partakes as little of one as of the other. Its old people and its children speak fluent French, its middle-aged citizens respond more readily to German, but the people speak Alsatian, and Alsatian is the language of Alsace. One may weep over Daudet's touching story of '*La dernière Classe*', at the same time feeling that its sentimentality is perhaps rather overdone. Do the Alsations really care so much what is their official language, since it has never succeeded in displacing the robust native tongue? I offer these my impressions for what they may be worth.

Strasbourg is beautiful with a freshness, a profusion, a sprightly grace that are all its own. Its shaded walks, its blossoming chestnuts, its warm colouring, its airy brightness are features very personal to itself. Its beer is marvellous; its cakes enchanting. Just to take beer and pretzels in any of the wide, active cafés of the Rue des Grands Arcades or on the Place Kléber, or to have tea and cakes or morning coffee with that almost obsolete luxury, a bun, in any of the pretty patisseries of the town, is to feel yourself remote from other places where you may have been in the habit of consuming things that went by these names. They do these things better in Alsace, and my advice to any thin and hungry traveller is to go at once and fatten in this delightful place.

To one who truly loves the greyness of France, the colour of Strasbourg at once sets it apart. The native stone, the *grès* of the Vosges mountains, is omnipresent. It isn't only the cathedral which is built of it—the cathedral inside and out, floor, walls, and statues—all the churches, many houses, some pavings and copings are of the same material, which abounds in the mountains of this region. It is loved at Strasbourg, where the cathedral seems to bask perpetually in the afterglow of a red sunset. In moments of



enthusiasm one is inclined to compare it to jasper, but viewed soberly it lacks the vivacity and variety of that stone. *Grès* is really sandstone, though the *grès* of the Vosges is superior to other similar products. The pink is between terra-cotta and brown. It is dry, like the red soil of Virginia. One must really love it well to call it rose. The texture is fine and even, which after the robuster limestone of which most French cathedrals are built, gives it a somewhat smooth and slick appearance not altogether agreeable. One welcomes it for its character and individuality without regretting that Reims and Amiens and Chartres were not made of it. Its surface lacks variety except where the stone is aged and dirty, yet Mérimée, who was certainly a connoisseur, admired it immensely: 'compact and fine', he described it, 'rose colour when it has just been cut, but taking a darker tone with time, like that of iron exposed to the air; moreover this stone lends itself admirably to every delicacy of Gothic ornamentation, and its hardness, which increases with the years, permits its employment for the finest mouldings, for the most precious details, in the execution of which the artists of the Middle Ages excelled'.

Victor Hugo thought Notre-Dame of Strasbourg '*plus belle encore que la beauté*'. All its lines are long as all its parts are long, and it is this which gives the façade that majestic ascensional movement so magnificently carried out in the one tall, tapering *flèche*. There should be two, undoubtedly, yet one amply satisfies the eye while the second might have spoiled the slender effect. 'The veritable triumph of this cathedral', says Victor Hugo, in his souvenirs of travel, 'is the *flèche*. It is a real tiara in stone with its crown and its cross. It is a prodigy of the gigantic and the delicate. I have seen Chartres, I have seen Antwerp; I wanted Strasbourg!' And although Viollet-le-Duc criticized in the tower the abuse of Gothic principles, he ends by naming it a *chef-d'œuvre* of science and of calculation, and, in short, the strangest conception that could be imagined.

It must be remembered in looking at the façade of Strasbourg that its architect designed its portail in two storeys only and that the third storey, between the towers, is a later addition, primarily designed to strengthen the spire. It is quite easy to blind oneself to this piece, with its two short windows quite out of humour with the rest and to see the roof terminating just over the row of figures above the rose. Take that piece away and see how vastly more elegant and beautiful the façade becomes; that third storey addition is very harmful. As the towers depart from the original façade they are pierced on all sides by three long windows with pointed gables over them to give lightness to the construction.

Over this part the form of the tower changes from square to octagonal and the tower becomes even lighter and more elegant. The eight sides of the octagon are pierced with still longer windows, through which we see the bells in silhouette against the sky, and the change in form is masked by very curious ladder-like forms in stone which reach to the point from which the flèche departs. The flèche itself is unlike any other, the octagonal form being carried by eight rows of constantly diminishing little pointed forms in the most dainty design, suggesting in arrangement an open pine-cone. These innumerable darts carry the eye up to that point where, as Pius II said, the tower 'hides its head in the clouds'.

The houses of the Rue Mercière hem the cathedral in and one cannot get an unobstructed view of the whole portail. This façade, the work of Erwin de Steinbach, is the most justly celebrated part of the edifice. The spring of the vertical lines, forming a screen of double tracery, gives it great elegance and distinction. Particularly admirable are those arcades which mask the walls of the lower storey and the lancet windows of the second. The rose, set in a square, is superbly beautiful from the outside because of the depth of its stone-work holding the glass. This design is especially charming and happy. The gables of the three deeply recessed doors are also beautifully designed,

and the tall pinnacles, which rise from the central one, increase the effect of lightness and soften the break between the first and second storey, otherwise sharply defined. In comparing Paris with Strasbourg, it would seem that Erwin had sought to avoid in his façade that severity which marks Notre-Dame of Paris, by veiling it with these exquisite devices.

The lower storey is rich in imagery, destined to instruct the people. The theme of the central door is the Life of Jesus, of which two panels form the sculpture of the tympanum. The Virgin and Child, of the central pier, are modern and the voussures have been much restored, having been damaged by the Revolutionists. On the other hand, the niches each side have kept their ancient statues, which date from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. According to popular tradition we may recognize in the beardless youth on the left, the architect, Erwin de Steinbach himself.

The side doors are smaller, quaintly pointed, and their chief beauty is the famous series of symbolical figures representing, on the north door, the Vices and Virtues, and on the south, the Wise and Foolish Virgins. These figures are stylistic rather than natural, but they are essentially characteristic of the sculpture of Strasbourg. They suffer if one happens to see them immediately after Reims, where the sculpture, even in its mutilated state, is on so noble a plane. The sculptors of Strasbourg were humorists, their personages are vivacious and amusing, but as sculptors their work is 'thin'. The women who represent the Virtues and the Vices smile archly, they take affected poses, they exaggerate their attitudes, and seem to act in a theatrical performance and to wear 'costumes'.

The subject of the tympanum of the north door is the Adoration of the Magi; that of the south door is the Last Judgment, and so we find in the niches the Wise and Foolish Virgins—the Foolish to the left of Jesus and the Wise on His right, symbolizing the reprovéd and the elect. The Wise Virgins hold their cruses carefully and stand soberly,

while the Foolish maids drop theirs or hold them upside down, and exhibit in the expression of their faces, in their poses and general deportment, their folly. The figures of both doors seem small, but have probably been subordinated to the simplicity of the façade itself. They do not carry, and hence are not effective in the general composition.

Over the door of the south transept is a celebrated tympanum representing the Death of the Virgin. It is said that Delacroix so much admired this panel that he had a cast made of it and when himself dying used to look at it for days at a time. In the relief Mary is represented stretched upon a bed and covered with voluminous draperies under which her form is outlined. According to the legend, Christ was present at his mother's death and cheered her last moments, while all of the apostles were transported, from the distant places where they were preaching, to her bedside. One of the apostles holds her head while another supports her feet. Over her Christ makes the sign of benediction and holds in His left hand a little figure which symbolizes her soul. The other apostles stand behind, their faces appearing along the edge of the circle, while a young woman crouches in the foreground wringing her hands in a gesture of grief and supplication. While there is indeed a certain beauty in this tympanum, the sculpture, like that of the west front, is affected and mannered, and the group has a sophisticated 'picturesqueness' not found in the analogous subject at Notre-Dame of Paris, where the artist has been completely moved by the grandeur of his subject. The draperies imitate antiquity and lose all that ruggedness of Gothic sculpture and one cannot help feeling, with all due respect to Mérimée, that the stone itself is not a happy medium for figure-work. In the smoothness of the draperies there is an unpleasant suggestion of wet sheets--cotton ones.

Two standing figures, very famous at Strasbourg, are placed one each side of this door—the Church and the Synagogue: the little guides claim them as *chef-d'œuvres* of Gothic statuary. Tradition attributes these two statues to

Sabine de Steinbach, the legendary daughter of Erwin, and that explains the presence on the parvis, before this portail, of portrait statues of the master and his daughter, both executed by Grass. The Synagogue is recognized by her broken standard and bandaged eyes and general downcast pose; the Church by her upright, proud outlook, the triumphant Cross and the sacred chalice. If they are indeed thirteenth century they are inferior works of that epoch, if I may venture to disagree with the little guide; they lack the earnestness of that time and they leave one cold. I find them 'thin' and German in feeling, or lack of feeling, as well as theatrical, and if weakness is a characteristic of women's work, I can see no reason against the popular notion, now dismissed, that they are the work of Erwin's daughter.

We are here before the entrance to Strasbourg's famous, too famous, performing clock, and since this is the great attraction to most visitors, the sacristan may be seen driving them out about half an hour before twelve o'clock, which is the hour when this remarkable piece of mechanism goes through its most elaborate antics. The sacristan drives the people out in order that they may purchase tickets, at a tiny window to the left of the south transept, to pay for the show and also to admit for a visit to the crypt and the other fine features of the interior. One may as well see the clock. It is a curiosity much valued by the natives, and certainly a valuable asset in making money for the church, as hundreds of people assemble daily in the dark transept and wait with a patience worthy of a better cause to see the apostles file past and to hear the cock crow.

There is another famous bit of sculpture here in the so-called 'Angels' Column', also thirteenth century, very much in the spirit of the rest of the work of this kind on the cathedral. This pillar is flanked by four engaged columns between which are three statues, one above the other, on each face, making twelve in all. The four lowest figures represent the four evangelists, standing upon their attri-

butes—the angel, the lion, the bull, and the eagle ; above them four angels sound trumpets ; and at the top Christ and three angels carrying the instruments of the Passion convey the idea of an abbreviated Last Judgment scene.

The interior of Notre-Dame of Strasbourg is very dim and shady, very vast in width—the nave as well as the side aisles being enormously wide—while the sanctuary is raised by a flight of thirteen steps which gives the church the effect of a Temple. All the windows have their glass, much of which is important. The bombardments of 1870 nearly demolished the windows, but the workmen of the '*Œuvre Notre-Dame*' succeeded, while projectiles were raining upon the cathedral, in taking out all the panels that could be reached with ladders or from the galleries. Of a total of four thousand six hundred panels these brave fellows managed to dismount six hundred and seventy and these were put into the crypt ; but of those that remained over twelve hundred were either wholly or partially broken. Some that were displaced have been oddly put together and there has been some bad restoration. The great rose which was destroyed by a storm in 1840, is a restoration by Petit Gérard, in 1845, who did the best and most useful work of restoration.

The roots of the Strasbourg cathedral strike back to the time of Clovis and his conversion to Christianity. He built a wooden church on the site where later Charlemagne was to erect a cathedral. Charlemagne's church was struck and destroyed by lightning, and its successor was burned in 1176, after which the present cathedral was begun, incorporating in its arrangements such parts as remained of the older buildings. Its ensemble therefore comprises a curious mixture of epochs, some of it dating back to the eleventh century. The most beautiful sepulchral monument contained in the cathedral is undoubtedly that of the Bishop Conrad de Lichtenberg, the protector of Erwin and one of the most zealous builders of the cathedral. He died at an advanced age in 1209.

We get a little picture of the Bishop from an account of

the laying of the corner-stone of the great portail. It was on the 2 February, 1276, exactly six months after the nave had been terminated, that ground was broken for the west façade. That day, which is Candlemas Day, the fête of the Purification of the Virgin, Conrad de Lichtenberg celebrated mass at an altar dedicated to the patron of the church, implored benediction, walked three times, followed by all the clergy, around the site of the proposed façade, blessed and consecrated the ground, and sinking a spade into the soil threw three spadefuls of earth aside as a prelude to the work. A quarrel arose amongst the workmen, each wanting to dig with the Bishop's shovel and at the place which he had occupied. One thing led to another and in the scrimmage a man was killed. The Bishop, alarmed at this bad omen, suspended the work for nine days and at the end of that time consecrated the ground anew.

A year later, on the 25 May, 1277, he laid the first stone of the tower, a ceremony recalled by an inscription, and in 1289 it was high enough to place the base of the second storey, where are now (remade) the equestrian statues of Clovis, Dagobert, and Rodolphe of Hapsbourg, placed there in 1291, in memory of the benefits which Strasbourg and Alsace had received at the hands of these monarchs. The fourth statue, that of Louis XIV, was added under the Restoration, in 1828, and the presence of this King here commemorates the passage of Alsace and the city of Strasbourg under French domination in his reign as well as the fact that Louis XIV restored the cathedral to the Catholic cult.

If there are certain '*rapprochements*' between the cathedrals of Reims and Strasbourg, not the least interesting of these is the similarity of their experiences in war between France and Germany. When we consider Strasbourg, proud and fine, slim and elegant, its interior in order, its slender flèche pointing confidently to the sky, we may feel consoled by the sight of what sixty years can do to wipe out the traces of war and destruction. In 1870 its

plight was only less terrible than that of Reims ten years ago, for the city was subjected to a formidable bombardment in which the cathedral was terribly injured.

In 1918, when, after forty-eight years of foreign domination, Alsace came back to France, the cathedral was the scene of a brilliant ceremony. From the top of the *flèche* floated an immense French flag, while the Maréchal Pétain, accompanied by the Generals de Castelnau, Gouraud, Fayolle, Maistre, Hirschauer, Humbert, and over a thousand officers, were received under the porch by the *grand vicaire* and the canons in their gala costumes and escorted into the nave, draped in a forest of flags, to hear the *Te Deum* of Victory sung by thousands of voices, accompanied by the organ which since the year 1489 had played at all the grand and solemn fêtes.



## CHAPTER X

### PARIS

**N**OTRE-DAME of Paris has one supreme advantage over all other cathedrals of France in the felicity of its site. None other can be so handsomely viewed from all sides as this one ; none other is subject to so many picturesque contrasts ; none other makes for so many incomparable vistas. Its unique situation in the centre of an island, with one side and its apse quite open to the river, frees it from encumbering houses and throws it open to a long range from the bridges of the Seine, both before and behind. The splendour of its blunt towers and its delicate flèche, the majesty of its matchless portail against the eastern sky on a beautiful afternoon, or on a fine moonlight night, are only rivalled by the clear view of the magnificent apse, which as one strolls along the quays from the direction of the Gare de Lyon is boldly drawn against the sunset clouds.

One could indicate many places from which there are surprising vistas, places where one comes upon it unexpectedly, as for instance from the opening of a tiny street of ancient flavour that runs before the small church of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, where it makes its turning out of the Rue Galande. This is, perhaps, the most striking vista of all Paris—the contrast between the poverty of the neighbourhood of narrow, congested streets, of huddled houses, a general savour of cheese and cabbages and wine-shops and must, and the dark passageway, almost an alley, lighted, transfigured, glorified by the radiant façade, the massive towers. Another view-point is from the Pont Sully, which crosses the extreme point of the Ile Saint-

Louis, from which the full force of the choir and apse, the gigantic spring of the flying buttresses, like the legs of a huge spider, are deeply impressive. Or there is a moment when, quietly prowling along the quays of Saint Louis's island, one comes abruptly upon the round point of the apse from the length of the Quai d'Orléans, looking across the arm of the river which separates the two islands. It is worth a long walk to make so magnificent a discovery.

This was not always so, naturally, for Notre-Dame, like most cathedrals, was originally hedged about by low-built, gable-end dwellings, by a multitude of little parish churches and chapels, camped within the shelter of its mighty wing. The cathedral was a sanctuary, a harbour of refuge, and people wanted to be as near it as possible. The idea of isolating a building in the middle of a vast space in order to be able to see it is quite a modern notion. Old engravings of Notre-Dame show the cathedral shouldered between its cloisters on the one hand and the imposing mass of the bishop's palace on the other, while the ancient parvis, the terrestrial paradise, a mere strip of clear space, was further hemmed in by the massive Hôtel-Dieu, which occupied the garden where is now the equestrian statue of Charlemagne and, bridging the Seine, took root on both island and mainland.

It was in such an environment of narrow streets, picturesque churches, and monastic dwellings that Maurice de Sully, the ambitious and powerful Bishop of Paris at the time of Louis le Jeune, set to work with his unrecorded architect to build the new cathedral. To make place for the carrying out of his vast plans two churches had to be destroyed, one dedicated to the Virgin and the other to Saint-Etienne. The first stone was laid by Alexander II during his exile in Paris, in 1163, and the building advanced so rapidly that shortly after Philippe-Auguste became King (in 1182) the high altar was consecrated and three years later Heraclius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, who had come to Paris to preach the Third Crusade, officiated in the choir.

In the capital city means were not lacking to finance an enterprise so dear to the hearts of the Bishop and the people. Maurice de Sully devoted his life and his fortune to the cathedral. In such an undertaking the bishop was the inspiration and the executant : he organized the work, approved the plans, selected the architect, paraded the relics, and received the offerings from private citizens and from the rich corporations which poured out their gold to defray the enormous cost. After the death of Maurice the choir was covered with a lead roof, thanks to a legacy of five thousand *livres* which he left for the purpose. In 1223, at the death of Philippe-Auguste, the great portail was finished up to the cornice which unites the towers.

The great glory of Notre-Dame is its magnificent façade. As one compares it with Reims, Amiens, Chartres, Laon, or any other of the great ones, one cannot but be struck with the unity and perfection of its design. Of the genius that conceived it we know nothing, for it is not signed in any way and the records do not say: but that one mind conceived it and carried it through is evident in the consistent symmetry of its parts, from the base of the elaborate entrances to the point where the massive towers begin to detach from the mass and to mount aloft.

Victor Hugo paid a glowing tribute to the façade in his *Notre-Dame*, calling attention to its three ogival doorways carved as it were out of the flat wall, to the embroidered and lacy band of the twenty-eight royal niches, the immense central rose flanked by its two lateral windows, the high and fragile gallery of arcades with trefoils carrying a heavy platform on its slender columns, and finally the two black and massive towers with their slate screens, harmonious parts of a magnificent whole, superposed in five gigantic storeys. In a beautiful passage which does not lend itself very well to translation he suggests how these things in turn and all at once crowd easily before the vision and develop as one looks. He speaks of the innumerable details of statuary, of sculpture and carving, rallied powerfully to produce the tranquil grandeur of the ensemble ;

'vast symphony in stone, so to speak; colossal work of a man and a people; . . . prodigious product of the collaboration of all the forces of an epoch, where on each stone one sees projected in a hundred ways the fancy of the workman disciplined by the genius of the artist; sort of human creation, in a word, powerful and fecund like the divine creation of which it seems to have appropriated the double character: variety, eternity'.

The Revolution menaced the cathedral with complete destruction: in August 1793, an act of the Commune decided that within eight days the *gothiques simulacres* of the kings of the portail of Notre-Dame should be thrown down and destroyed, together with the religious effigies in marble and bronze. The counsel of the Commune ratified this announcement, but Citizen Chaumette claimed exemption for the monument in the interests of Art and philosophy, affirming that the astronomer Dupuis had found his planetary system in one of the collateral doors. After this plea the counsel decreed that the Citizen Dupuis be joined to the administration in order to preserve the monuments worthy of being known to posterity, and the basilica was saved.

But not until after very considerable damage had been done, and so the portail presents a fairly general restoration at the hands of the celebrated Viollet-le-Duc. The statues in the niches between the doors and on the ends are restored; they represent Saint-Etienne to the north and Saint-Denis, the patron of Paris, to the south. Between, on each side of the central door, are two women identified as the Church and the Synagogue. The Church, proud and triumphant, holds her head high with her eyes fixed upon the Redeemer: the Synagogue, her eyes bandaged, drops her head humiliated and vanquished. The Church, coiffed with a diadem, holds up the Cross and the chalice; the Synagogue lets fall her crown, the Tables of the Law, and her broken standard.

Above the doors stand the twenty-eight kings of Judea, restored by Viollet-le-Duc also, representing the ancestors

of the Virgin. These are found on the façades of the cathedrals dedicated to the Virgin; they assist at her glorification at Reims, at Amiens, at Chartres, at Poitiers. It was a popular fallacy that these royal personages, who are mentioned in the Gospel of Saint Matthew, were portraits of the kings of France, and one of the statues, standing on a lion, has always been pointed out as Pepin the Short. This error dates as far back as the origin of Gothic cathedrals, for a manuscript of the thirteenth century, on the 'manners of villains', relates how vicious idlers used to hang about Notre-Dame and while pointing out to gaping visitors, with 'There is Pepin, there is Charlemagne', stole their purses from behind. (*'Li vilains Babuins est cil ki va devant Notre-Dame à Paris, et regarde les rois et dist: "Vés-la Pepin, vés-la Charlemaigne", et on li coupe sa bourse par derrière.'*)

In the light of a better understanding of the iconography of the cathedrals these statues complete by their presence the group of personages who participated in the coming of Christ. The king posed on a lion can be no other than David—he holds a cross and a sword; the other king, holding a cross and a ring, is Solomon.

Another popular belief is that Notre-Dame once stood upon an elevation above the parvis and that its western face was preceded by a flight of thirteen or more steps, whose masonry made for this cathedral an admirable base, and more than one writer has described in moving language the 'sea of Paris paving' rising and devouring one after another the treads of its pedestal. That this was not the case was proven by excavations made in 1847 about the base of the building, at which time nothing was discovered to bear out the tale. Viollet-le-Duc thought it probable that these steps, of which so many writers speak without having seen them, existed on the side of the south tower and that they descended towards the river. While it was evident to the architects of the restoration that the towers had been designed to carry stone steeples, Viollet-le-Duc decided against the addition, thinking that

the building would gain nothing by the completion of a design left unfinished for so many centuries and indeed, since there was no evidence in the construction to show that means had lacked to carry out the towers, it was thought that the original architect may have condemned his first project himself. The flèche, of wood covered with lead, though beautiful, is a restoration.

An interesting feature of the façade is the not immediately obvious and rather slight difference in the width of the towers, the south tower being somewhat more slender than the north. Upon attentive examination it is perceptible that the whole of this vertical section under the south tower is narrower than its counterpart, but the difference has been so carefully and cleverly distributed that it takes a sharp eye to detect it unless it is pointed out. All the parts have been reduced in proportion; the gallery of arcades is just a trifle finer and more pointed on the south side than on the north; the same is true of the lateral window underneath. When we come to the band of kings there is a more positive difference, for while in the left-hand space there are eight niches and eight figures, there are but seven on the narrow side, but all so neatly calculated that one must count them to make sure. The root of the whole matter seems to lie in the door on this side, dedicated to Sainte-Anne, but carrying a portrait of Saint-Marcel, the ninth Bishop of Paris, on the central pier.

Now, this door is one of the most interesting features of the grand portail for it is a survivor of an earlier design for the façade which was begun and then, because it was not big enough, torn down and begun over again on a grander scale. This door dates in its essential construction from the twelfth century and is contemporary with the apse. It is a Roman door made Gothic by the most obvious alterations, and it is therefore of great interest as it shows the very moment of transition from one style to the other. Maurice de Sully intended it for the central door of the primitive plan and after his death, when the architect

of the new portail took hold of the work, he evidently considered it too good to discard and utilized it for one of the lateral entrances. Since it was too low to accord with its counterpart, the Virgin's door, the tympanum was raised by the introduction of another panel of sculpture, the lowest one, while the round Roman arch was changed to Gothic by the simple building up of a point, and some new figures were added to the choirs of the voussures in order to fill the thus amplified bay. Much of the sculpture of this door is restored. The quaint figure of Saint-Marcel is a faithful reproduction of the original, now in the Cluny Museum ; the four statues each side, representing Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Solomon, David, the Queen of Sheba, Bathsheba, and two kings, ancestors of the Virgin, are reproductions. The tympanum deals with the history of Sainte-Anne and the Virgin. The marriage of Mary is the subject of the lower panel ; the Annunciation, the Presentation, the Adoration of the Shepherds, etc., fill the second panel, while in the top is the Madonna enthroned.

If this is the most interesting door from the point of view of its history, its companion, dedicated to the Virgin, is the most beautiful. Viollet-le-Duc described it as a poem in stone. Its parts are charmingly harmonious and simple. The statue upon the central pier is not the original—that was sent to Saint-Denis—but another fifteenth-century Madonna taken from an old church. The pedestal also has lost its original reliefs. It is above that we must look for the true beauty of this door. The Virgin stands under a small canopy over which is another little dais sheltering a small construction, and this divides the first panel of the tympanum into two parts. To the right of the Virgin, in this panel, are seated three prophets, their heads covered with veils, and on the left three crowned kings, all six personages holding banderoles with a meditative air. The prophets foretell the advent of the Messiah and the kings are Mary's forbears. These six figures, remarkable for their realism, controlled by the Gothic

convention, are considered the most beautiful of their epoch.

The second zone represents the entombment of the Virgin, in a rich sarcophagus; in the point of the tympanum Mary is glorified as the queen of angels and men. Christ shares her throne and has just placed a crown upon her head. The sculptor has exhausted his subject in order to fill the four choirs of the soffit with historic personages and devices. The door is complete and balanced and stands out as one of the most perfect specimens of its kind. The statues each side are easily recognizable: Saint-Denis, carrying his head, between two angels and Constantine, on one side, and John the Baptist, Saint-Etienne, Sainte-Geneviève, and Pope Saint-Sylvestre on the other. The beauty and antiquity of the entrance is greatly enhanced by a quantity of small panels in relief upon the two sides of the door. It is here that one finds that celebrated almanack in stone so often spoken of, figuring the signs of the zodiac together with the different occupations of the months and seasons.

The central door, called the *Porte du Jugement*, follows the theme usually found on cathedrals dedicated to the Virgin, and deals with the second coming of Christ. Religious terror, the emotional keynote of the entire portail, is here expressed in the traditional manner. The Christ of the central pillar is restored from the *Beau-Dieu* of Amiens, the noblest type, by Geoffrey Déchaume, one of the ablest sculptors who worked under Viollet-le-Duc. This was necessary not because of the depredations of the Revolutionists, as might be thought, but because, in 1771, the clergy did away with the central pier and discarded the statue in order to raise the height of the doorway, at the expense also of the lower part of the tympanum with its beautiful sculpture, so as to gain more space for effective processions. The lower zone of the tympanum therefore is entirely modern and it is only above it that the ancient sculpture remains intact. The group of five figures which fills the point, in which Christ sits on the judgment seat



with the earth as His footstool, accompanied by two angels and the Virgin and Saint John, is considered one of the most important works of the thirteenth century.

The voussoir of this door, in choirs of six rows, is one of the most remarkable and beautiful, and it is still no uncommon sight to see pious folk standing reverently looking up at its imagery, trying to grasp the meaning of these angels, archangels, saints, and devils so vigorously expressed, with relation to their own hopes of salvation. The demonology of Notre-Dame gave the widest scope to the imagination of its artists. In certain lights and at the proper distance one may still get quite clearly the impression of the gilding and colour that once covered the sculpture of the doors. The central tympanum glows with the warmth of the effaced decoration.

In these mystical ages it was rare that the Devil was not credited with some part in the building of a cathedral. At Cologne he was supposed to have been the architect, at Paris he figures as a blacksmith, and the ironwork of the end doors, the finest that the twelfth and thirteenth centuries produced, is ascribed by popular tradition to him. Certain medieval records go so far as to show gravely written one *Biscornette* as the forger of these hinges, legend and history having become hopelessly entangled.

The interior of Notre-Dame is majestic and impressive. That it is early Gothic, fifty years or more earlier than Amiens and Beauvais, is indicated by the massive, round columns which support the vaulting of the nave, their capitals decorated with the acanthus leaf, the water-lily, the fern, motives surviving from the Roman manner. The church is dark, mysterious, vast : it seems to exhale inexhaustible memories of pomps and vanities, of fêtes and processions, of agony and desecration, of primitive piety, of all the events which have succeeded one another under its roof.

Although the diocese of Paris until 1622 was a simple bishopric, a dependence of the see of Sens, its cathedral was, beginning with the year 360, the place chosen for

the reunion of ecclesiastical councils, of which sixty-seven were held here. The object of the most important of these councils was to take rigorous measures against the heretics and to terminate by severe discipline the irregular habits of the clergy. In 360 Saturnin, Bishop of Arles, was excommunicated in Notre-Dame. In 1104 Philippe I presented himself barefoot and with profound humiliation swore on the Gospels to have no further intercourse with Bertrade, not to see her except in the presence of reputable witnesses, and Bertrade, having taken the same vow, the King was absolved. In 1210 the Cardinal Pierre de Curçon, the Pope's legate, condemned Amaury's methods and ordered that fourteen of his disciples should be burned alive. But the most iniquitous of these councils was that presided over by the Archbishop of Sens, Philippe de Marigny, who in May, 1310, conducted the trial of the Templars, condemned several to life imprisonment, and gave fifty-nine to the headsman: these last having retracted what torture had made them confess, were burned in a slow fire in the faubourg Saint-Antoine. The last council was assembled by order of Napoleon in 1811; it was presided over by Cardinal Fesch and attended by six cardinals, nine archbishops, eighty bishops, and nine priests named by the Emperor for the dioceses of France, Italy, and that part of Germany comprised in his possessions, which Pius VII, a prisoner at Savines, had refused to recognize.

Amongst other impressive sights the cathedral saw, on Holy Thursday, the 12 April, 1229, Raymond VII, Count of Toulouse, one of the most powerful feudal lords of Europe, absolved from the crime of having upheld the Albigeois. Cardinal Saint-Ange officiated. 'It was pitiful', says the chronicler, Guillaume de Putlaurens, 'to see this great man who had for so long resisted so many strong nations, conducted naked but for his shirt, his arms and feet bare, to the altar.' It was from Notre-Dame that Saint-Louis departed for the Holy Land. Half a century later Philippe de Valois, after the Battle of Cassel, rode

into the basilica on his horse and piously deposited his war harness at the feet of the Virgin. In 1381 the church saw Hugues Aubriot, Provost of Paris, kneel before its porch to be publicly accused of heresy and other crimes and then to be sentenced to be cast into an *oubliette* and fed upon bread and water.

In this cathedral Henry IV of England was crowned King of France, in 1431, and its walls witnessed the re-taking of Paris by the troops of Charles VII, in 1436, as well as the memorable process of the rehabilitation of Joan of Arc which opened on the 7 November, 1455, by order of Calixtus III. At this investigation, which was held at the request of the Pucelle's mother and brothers, the Archbishop of Reims presided, assisted by Guillaume Chartier, Bishop of Paris; Olivier, Bishop of Coutances; and the dominican Jean Bréal, inquisitor.

Just before the death of Henri II, in 1559, the cathedral witnessed the marriage of his eldest daughter, Elisabeth, to Philip II of Spain. This marriage, destined to end so tragically for the princess, was celebrated with utmost pomp and solemnity at Notre-Dame, the Duke of Alva standing proxy for his cousin, the King. All Spain as well as all France was present to fête the occasion, and Henri himself opened the tournament inaugurating the festivities. In the fêtes which succeeded the ceremony all the princes, cardinals, and lords vied with one another in entertainments intended to dazzle the Spanish visitors.

Notre-Dame preserves the memory of the marriage of Henri's youngest daughter, the Princess Marguerite de Valois, to Henri IV, then King of Navarre, on the 18 August, 1572, a few days before the massacre of Saint Bartholomew. A special dispensation was necessary for this union, not only because of the difference in religion between the two young people, but also because they were blood relations. The Pope refused his sanction, but Marguerite's mother and her brother, Charles IX, having determined upon the alliance, the Cardinal de Bourbon, Henri's uncle, was finally persuaded to tie the knot.

The King of Navarre, wearing heavy mourning for his mother, came to Paris, accompanied by eight hundred Huguenot nobles, all in black, and was received by the King and the court with great honour. It is the Princess herself, in her memoirs, who gives the account of the ceremony, which was fixed for a few days later and celebrated with 'more triumph and magnificence than that of anyone else of her degree'. The King of Navarre and his courtiers, having quitted their mourning, appeared dressed in beautiful habits and all the paraphernalia of the court costume. Marguerite was dressed in royal robes with the crown and ermine, bedizened with jewels, and wore a great blue mantle whose train was carried by three princesses. The way from the bishop's palace to the cathedral was connected by a great scaffolding or platform, draped in cloth of gold, which extended into the church as far as the tribune. While the procession passed over it the crowd below could see well into the church, which was filled to suffocation with all the court. After the ceremony Marguerite descended by the steps into the choir to hear mass, while the King left the church by the nave. . . . It was to Notre-Dame that Henry returned after his triumphs.

Of the terrors of the Revolution we have already spoken. The high altar, with all its accessories, was destroyed, and the cathedral became a Temple of Reason, while Mademoiselle Maillard, attended by her priestesses, supers from the Opéra, was adorned as the Goddess of Reason.

After this holocaust the next ceremonial of consequence was the coronation of Napoleon and Josephine, of which the painter, David, has left an impressive picture. It was on 2 December, 1794, that the Pope, having consented to come to Paris, anointed Napoleon before the altar and touched Josephine with the sacred oil on the forehead and palms of the hands. He celebrated mass, blessed the sword and ring, the mantle, the globe, the sceptre, and the crown, and then Napoleon took the crown and put it on his own head. After he had thus proclaimed himself

Emperor he crowned his consort as she knelt before him.

The ceremony, which had cost a fortune, was more ostentatious than popular. The costumes, designed by Isabey and David, were sumptuous and theatrical, and the solemn meeting of the Pope and the Emperor immortalized by David's brush, have made, it is said, more impression upon posterity than upon contemporaries. Fontanes, who as president of the legislative body had pronounced an eloquent address of welcome, told his friends that evening that 'the imperial cavalcade greatly resembled one which follows a fatted bull'. . . . It was in Notre-Dame that Napoleon III married Eugénie de Montijo.

The entry of a new bishop into the diocese of Paris was accompanied by gorgeous ceremonies. A delegation of aldermen and other city officials, headed by the provost of merchants, advanced without the walls as far as the Abbey of Saint-Victor to meet the incoming prelate. The bishop mounted a white horse and the cortège proceeded to the church of Sainte-Geneviève and there the *procureur fiscal* called in a loud voice for the vassals of the see, whose duty it was to carry the prelate's chair. Two kings of France, Philippe-Auguste and Louis IX, owned certain lands by which they became the bishop's vassals and were liable to be called upon to officiate in this capacity, but were replaced by knights of their house. Four barons, preceded by the abbot and monks of Sainte-Geneviève, carried the bishop to the Rue Neuve Notre-Dame and here the cortège was met by the dean and canons of Notre-Dame who conducted it to the cathedral. At the threshold the incumbent took the oath of office, swearing upon the Gospels to conserve the privileges, exemptions, and immunities of the church, and then followed a solemn high mass, after which the bishop was conducted to his palace where he gave a great banquet to all those who had witnessed the ceremony.

Aside from its great architectural beauty there are a

few important features of the interior that should on no account be missed. Prominent amongst these are the three rose windows. They are of great beauty, and each completes the story of its portail. The rose of the western façade, partly hidden by the organ pipes, gives the history of the Virgin; the great one above the *Porte du Cloître*, to the north, is consecrated to her life and miracles; and the third rose, over the south door, presents in four circles the choir of the apostles, the army of bishops, saints and angels. Aside from the roses all the glass of Notre-Dame was dismounted and lost in the year 1741. Most of it dated from 1182.

Of equal importance with the glass are two fragments of the ancient screen which formerly made a continuous band of sculpture around the choir. The work is exceedingly curious, consisting of a frieze of stone figures, painted and gilded, which tell the story of Christ. This series was so arranged that the cycle, beginning at the east, passed along the north side of the choir to the west, was continued on the lectern, where the Passion, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection were pictured in front of the congregation, and concluded in a series of panels moving from west to east back to the starting-point. Some handsome *grilles*, introduced by Louis XIV to allow his embellishment of the choir to be seen, interrupt the series and cut off both the beginning and the end. The sculpture of the north side is the earliest: it carries the story from the Visitation to the Agony in the Garden; it is vividly conceived and executed with force and virility. The artist of the later scenes, on the south side, left his name, Jehan Ravy, and his nephew Jehan le Bouteiller finished the work in 1351.

As for Louis XIV's improvements to the choir, they were carried out at the expense of some of the great beauties of the original, for old writers describe the old altar as of great magnificence. The King tore it out together with the rood-screen, in order to give place to a large *Pietà* with kneeling statues of himself and his father, Louis XIII,

offering their crowns and sceptres to the Virgin. This was in accordance with a vow made by Louis XIII who, in 1638, having put his kingdom under the protection of the Virgin, pledged himself to rebuild the high altar with the sculptural groups as described. He died before carrying his vow into effect, and Louis XIV undertook to accomplish it for him. The Pietà is by Coustou the elder, the statue of Louis XIII is by his brother Guillaume, and the Louis XIV is by the master Coysevox.

Against the pillar to the left of the choir is a statue of Saint-Denis by Nicolas Coustou, simple, impressive and beautifully modelled. Against the opposite pillar is a Gothic statue of the Virgin held in high veneration by the faithful. It is a fine example of fourteenth-century sculpture.

The whole church, now so bare of historic memorials, was formerly paved with sepulchral stones, similar to the few relics to be seen at the Cluny Museum, and history was written large on the floor of the nave, the chapels, and the choir, where one could read inscriptions and study effigies of the most illustrious personages of the Church and State. 'It was a moving and solemn spectacle', says a contemporary writer, 'to see all these dead planted till the Day of Judgment.'

## CHAPTER XI

### TROYES AND SENS

OF the one-day trips that may be made from Paris in quest of cathedrals there is none more agreeable and satisfying than that which combines Troyes and Sens. These two ancient towns of Champagne and Burgundy lie about forty-four miles apart across country, and are connected by one of the little branch lines of railway whose trains stop at every station and give one an opportunity to become acquainted with the pretty, level grape-growing country through which they pass. Although it takes about as long to do this short journey as it does to come more than twice as far, from Paris to Troyes, and to return from Sens to Paris, all three distances being coverable in about two hours each, the feat can be conveniently accomplished in a day, as I know who have done it. The trains, for once, combine well, and once one has got over the difficulty of getting up and to the Gare de l'Est for the 7.40 to Troyes, the rest of the journey takes care of itself. There are over two hours and a half for Troyes before the 12.28 leaves for Sens, and at Sens there are several late afternoon expresses which bring one back to the Gare de Lyon in time to go to bed. There will be no time for lunch at Troyes, but lots of leisure for a picnic in the little train across country, while at Sens one may have tea and dinner too before returning to Paris. There is only one catch in this and that is to leave the branch line train at Sens-l'Est and not to go on to Sens-Lyon, which is a waste of time.

There is a certain feeling of originality and triumph in this excursion, as these two beautiful cathedrals, especially



that of Troyes, are neglected by tourists. Sens is one of those places which suffer from being on a fine direct route to the south : the *de luxe* trains flash past it in their eagerness to be off to the Riviera and tourists have not the patience to break the journey, which would entail a different mode of travel by less luxurious trains. Troyes, on the other hand, is neglected for just the opposite reason. It is not particularly on the way to anywhere, unless it be to Switzerland, but the fact that it lies in a part of France more or less unexplored is not the least of its attractions. It has been less spoiled by contact with tourists and it has more genuine flavour in consequence. Its narrow and crooked old streets, its quantities of antiquated timber houses, its canals and little bridges and its numerous important churches make it one of the quaintest and most interesting towns of eastern France. '*Vous venez de Troyes, qu'y fait-on ?—On y sonne*', used to be an old saying. This charming city is, in effect, peopled with churches.

Troyes lies upon the upper reaches of the river Seine, which divides here into several arms, and aside from having been an ancient Celtic capital and a Roman stronghold was the old capital of Champagne and is now the chief town of the Aube. On account of its fine situation on the Seine it was, before the days of railroads, a place of great commercial importance, so much so that 'Troy weight' became the recognized standard. It was from Troyes that Sainte-Geneviève set forth in her boat to bring provisions to Paris when that city was besieged by Attila, as students of the Puvis de Chavannes frescoes in the Panthéon will not need to be told.

Saint-Loup was one of its first bishops, and he averted an attack by Attila in the fifth century. The town was sacked by the Normans in 890 and 905. In the interval Louis II was crowned king here by Pope John VIII, in 877, and subsequently Troyes became the capital and residence of the counts of Champagne, of whom the best known was Thibaut IV, called the Minstrel. It was afterwards allied to the crown, but fell into the hands of the Burgun-

dians and the English during the time that Charles VI was incapacitated and it was here that the treaty of 1420 was signed which acknowledged Henri V of England regent of France and declared the illegitimacy of the Dauphin, Joan of Arc's protégé. The treaty provided for Henry's marriage to Catherine de France, or Catherine of Valois as she was called, and this marriage was solemnized in the church of Saint John. The latter part of Shakespeare's Henry V is laid in the palace of Troyes. In 1429 the town was taken by the Maid of Orléans and the Dauphin became Charles VII.

In the sixteenth century Troyes was an important centre of Art, and its churches are richly embellished with the works of a talented group of painters and sculptors attracted hither by the sumptuous commissions provided by the bishops and the counts of Champagne. Amongst these were : Martin Chambiges, Giovanni Gualdo, Nicolas Haslin, Jacques Bachot, Nicolas Cordonnier, Linard Gonthier, Jacques Juliot, Florent Drouin, Domenico Pinucci, and above all that celebrated sculptor, François Gentil. Troyes also gave birth to a pretty group of men of distinction and genius : Chrestien, the 'trovère', Pope Urbain IV, Nicolas and Pierre Mignard, the painters, and the sculptors, Girardon and Simart, were all natives of Troyes.

Protestantism found ready acceptance in Troyes, and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes ruined its industrial prosperity and reduced its population from fifty thousand to twelve thousand inhabitants. The city also suffered greatly from the campaign of 1814 owing to its position near the centre of strategic operations.

With these few facts in mind, as we have only two hours and a half for Troyes, it will be well to lay out a little itinerary and not depart from it. We shall take in order by a route that entails no retracing of steps, the cathedral, Saint-Urbain, Saint-Jean, and La Madeleine. The Rue Thiers, one of the chief streets of Troyes, sets out from in front of the railway station and leads direct to the Quai Dampierre, where a turn to the right brings us to a bridge,

the second one, upon which runs the tram ; we cross that bridge and find ourselves in the Rue de Cité from along which the cathedral of Saint-Pierre and Saint-Paul soon looms in sight. It is an imposing edifice, broad and massive, its heaviest bulk to the left, for only its Tour Saint-Pierre was finished. Saint-Paul never got beyond the level of the roof of the nave.

The see of Troyes was founded early in the fourth century. The last of the series of cathedral which preceded the present one was destroyed with the greater part of the city in 1188 by a great fire. This calamity happened at the time when Europe was engaged with the Holy Wars, and thus it was that twenty years elapsed before anything was done about rebuilding. Bishop Hervé, in 1208, made the plans and laid the corner-stone, but, although the essential parts were finished by the end of the fifteenth century, the construction of this church dragged along through four centuries and even then was left without its second tower. The most remarkable parts were built at the time of profound faith, naïve and absolute, when workmen's names were not recorded and when money was a small consideration. Henri Stein, who goes into the subject of remuneration at some length in his interesting work,<sup>1</sup> says that in 1484 the master workman received in addition to his modest annuity a salary of four sous two deniers per day in summer and three sous nine deniers in winter, while the stonecutters were paid in proportion and simple workmen got only two sous six deniers a day.

It is an interesting church for architects as it combines styles of Gothic from Romanesque to Renaissance. It was abandoned during a long period on account of the preoccupations of the Hundred Years War and work upon it was not begun again until the reign of Charles VII. Martin Chambiges made the plan of the chief portail, in 1507, and this was a great feather in the cap of Troyes, for had not this illustrious architect just finished the magnificent flamboyant portails of the Beauvais cathedral?

<sup>1</sup> *Les Architectes des cathédrales gothiques*, p. 28.

The world rang with his fame and he was in great demand. His son and son-in-law carried on the work of the façade, which was designed to carry a series of beautiful sculptures of which, though most were executed, few survived the Revolution. The niches and pier of the central door and its great gable have lost their statues; the tympanums have been denuded of their reliefs, executed by Champenois artists of the sixteenth century, representing the Passion of Christ, and the lives of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The Renaissance in Champagne was a time of great achievement and fecundity in sculpture, as may be judged by the treasures of the other churches—the Saint Martha and the *jubé* of the Madeleine and the *Visitation*, of Saint-Jean, which are of the same epoch as the works destroyed at the cathedral. Nevertheless, the west front of the cathedral is one of the most pleasing specimens of flamboyant architecture in France, being rich without exuberance and free from the bad taste which sometimes disfigures works of this class and age.

‘For several reasons’, says Bumpus, ‘I prefer the interior of Troyes cathedral to any I have seen in France. The finest effects are perceptible at about an hour before sunset in summer. Nothing can then surpass the effect produced by the double aisles and their flanking chapels seen from any one of the four corners of the nave, constituting as they do one of the most memorable characteristics of the sacred fane. . . . It is indeed a noble interior enriched by a complete series of glass in the choir and clerestory.’

Much of the glass is fifteenth century, but a later window, dated 1625, known as the ‘Wine-press window’, is one of the most famous. This window is to be found on the left-hand side of the nave. It is a six-panel composition of which the chief subject shows our Saviour, wearing the crown of thorns, lying in a half-opened tomb, while the blood still flowing from His wounds is caught in a chalice. From His side grows a tree which, as it branches upwards, bears the twelve apostles as fruit, in garlands of grapes. A duke and a bishop, with their patron saints, kneel in

the side panels. In addition to this remarkable window there is another famous one, a fine Jesse window, in the clerestory.

The church contains a number of works of art, such as the engraved tombstones throughout, a statue of the Virgin, by Simart, in the Lady Chapel, and a group in painted stone representing the baptism of John the Baptist, by François Gentil. The Treasure is rich in the possession of an ivory coffer ornamented with carving, brought from Constantinople by Archdeacon Hugo, after the first Crusade, and many other objects of intrinsic interest and historical value.

Our route on leaving the cathedral by the same street and same bridge is to bear a little to the left and gain the Place de la Préfecture, in which stands the church of Saint-Urbain, a thirteenth and fourteenth century sanctuary offered to Troyes by the Pope for whom it is named. Jacques Pantaléon, as he was called in secular life, was born in Troyes, the son of a cobbler of old shoes, in 1185. He had a remarkable career, beginning as clerk of the cathedral when he was ten years old, becoming priest at thirty, and rising steadily in eminence, until, after having been Bishop of Verdun and Patriarch of Jerusalem, he became Pope, in 1261. It was Urbain IV who gave France the Two Sicilies. This church contains some excellent thirteenth-century glass.

The Rue Urbain IV leads directly to the church of Saint-Jean, which is particularly rich in souvenirs of the artists who worked at Troyes. Its chief attraction is a beautiful *Visitation*, attributed to Nicolas Haslin and dating from about 1520. It is fixed to the wall of the third chapel to the right of the choir. The subject is two *bourgeoise* ladies in visiting costumes of the epoch of its making, meeting to exchange pleasant words. It is typically Renaissance in feeling, in its complete departure from the Gothic tradition.

Leaving Saint-Jean we must make our way back to the Rue Thiers by a series of small streets, scarcely more than

alleyways, and there, between the Rue Thiers and the Rue Claude Huez, is the old church of La Madeleine. The dismal and neglected exterior of La Madeleine, to which the entrance is from a narrow passage, is in great contrast with the magnificence of its rood-screen. This rood-screen is the most illustrious thing to be seen at Troyes as well as one of the most exquisite treasures of religious Art in France. That this little twelfth-century church, in the Roman style, should have received, between 1508 and 1517, a screen in which the sinuous lines of flamboyant Gothic combine with the fantasies of the earliest Renaissance, and should have preserved the work intact when so many great churches of France have lost theirs, gives especial interest and piquancy to La Madeleine. The *jubé* hangs across the opening of the choir like a rich piece of heavy lace. Its top, crowned with fleurs-de-lis, sustains two eloquent statues of Saint John and the Virgin, who are there in relation to a crucifix which stands between them. For the rest this screen is elaborate to the point of floridity and is embellished with many little statues under canopies and groups in quatre-foils.

On the right-hand pillar of the nave and transept is a most beautiful statue of Martha by François Gentil, which proves the great talent of this not too well-known sculptor. This saint, who exorcised the 'tarasque', a fabulous animal, is here expressed in a most sympathetic manner. She stands against the pillar in an appealing pose, her thoughtful face downcast, intent upon something in her hands.

The advantage of seeing La Madeleine last is that one may loiter over its beauty until the last moment before taking the train, as the station is very near. It is a pleasant little jogging journey across Champagne to Sens-l'Est, a suburban station much nearer to the town of Sens than the chief station on the main line. Descending then at this station it is but a short walk along the outskirts of the town to the cathedral, one of the most excellent of Gothic monuments, and of immense historical importance as the church in which Saint-Louis married Marguerite de

Provence and to which he brought the crown of thorns on its way from Jerusalem to Paris.

Of Sens itself, now a mere *sous-préfecture* of the Yonne, reduced by the Revolution to simple rank amongst less worthy cities of France, the grandeurs of its memories must be sought in such of its monuments as remain to speak for its history. When the Gauls, under Brennus, conquered Rome, in the year 390 B.C., 'Agendicum' (Sens) already existed and became one of the capitals of Gaul. The vast proportions and magnificence of the edifices raised here by the Romans is revealed in the fragments of sculptured stone and inscriptions found in the foundations of the fortified wall of the third century, which gathered together now form at Sens one of the richest Gallo-Roman museums of all France. An amphitheatre, baths, temples, funeral monuments, and superb mosaics which have been dug up from the soil of the city, denote the wealth and splendour of the old town and the luxury of its inhabitants.

During the whole of the Middle Ages Sens preserved something of its early importance thanks to its archbishopric which was a great one, its dominion extending over the neighbouring sees of Chartres, Auxerre, Meaux, Paris, Orléans, Nevers, and Troyes. The first letters of these cities formed the word 'campont', which was taken as the device of the metropolitan church. The importance of Sens was sustained also by the high influence of several of its prelates, amongst whom were Guillaume de Champagne, uncle of Philippe-Auguste; Gautier Cornut, counsellor of Blanche de Castille; the Cardinal Duprat, minister to François I; the Cardinal Louis de Bourbon, uncle to Henri IV; the Cardinal du Perron, a famous theologian; and the Cardinal de Luynes, friend and confidant of the Grand Dauphin, father of Louis XVI. When, in the seventeenth century, Paris was raised to an archbishopric, Chartres, Orléans, and Meaux were also detached from Sens. Now Troyes, Nevers, and Moulins only are suffragans of Sens, Auxerre having been suppressed after the Revolution,

but the Bishop of Sens bears also the title Bishop of Auxerre.

Saint-Etienne of Sens has particular interest for Anglo-Saxons on account of its several points of contact with the cathedral of Canterbury. It is known that after Canterbury had been ruined by a fire, about the year 1175, a Senonais architect was chosen from amongst numerous candidates to rebuild that cathedral. Guillaume of Sens accomplished this prodigious construction in five years, leaving untouched or repairing simply those parts which had been respected by the fire. The cathedral of Sens is also attributed to this architect, who certainly worked upon its completion, but unless we are to believe him to have attained a very great age, he could hardly have been the bold and experienced architect who in 1130 set aside the traditional methods of construction in laying the foundations. If he still lived in 1179 this man would have been well along in years. Now Guillaume of Sens at this time was in the prime of life, for it was in directing the work at Canterbury that he fell from a scaffolding there, dying of injuries thus received upon his return to France, in 1180.

Saint-Etienne has a noble façade, though like Saint Peter and Saint Paul at Troyes only one of its towers is finished. There is a fineness in its design, in the spacing of its windows, the double row of arcades around the top, in the proportions of the tower which lend great zest to the view as seen from one of the cafés of the Place de la République. The three handsome doors have kept their sculpture: the central one, dedicated to Saint Stephen, bears a fine statue of this personage on the pier, a work of the thirteenth century. In the tympanum a series of seven bas-reliefs relate the legend of the saint. On the right-hand door the statuettes representing the prophets have had their heads broken; the reliefs of the tympanum describe the death, the entombment, the assumption, and the coronation of the Virgin. On the left-hand door the subjects are from the life of John the Baptist.

While the chief statuary of the doors is interesting and



precious it is of a kind that may be seen elsewhere. What is unique and altogether delightful at Sens is the series of little scenes in the medallions of the façade. In this iconography it is delightful to trace the desire which animated the artists of the Middle Ages, who, feeling that the church was a small edition of the world, sought to put into it all of creation. At Notre-Dame of Paris there are two reliefs which show this ambition to embrace the universe: one of these represents the earth in the figure of the fecund mother whose open robe discloses the inexhaustible breasts; a young woman kneels before her and approaching her lips prepares to drink life. The other symbolizes the Ocean, upon which an antique divinity, very much mutilated, rides an enormous fish harnessed with bit and bridle. The genius of the Ocean bears a ship in his hand. Now this same idea takes a different form at Sens, where the sculptor again expresses the land and the sea. He carves in the medallions of the surbase of the great door the elephant of India, charged with his tower, the griffon, ancient guardian of the treasures of Asia, the ostrich, and the camel. A man riding a fish, as at Notre-Dame, typifies the sea, while a man lying on his back, the legendary sciapode, raises his foot as a grotesque parasol to shelter him from the rays of the sun. This figure alone expresses all the unknown Orient where no traveller had ventured since Alexander. Lest any reader should be as ignorant as I myself, until I had looked it up, I may mention that the sciapodes were a fabulous people of Lybia who had but one foot, but that one so big, says Pliny, that they could use it in repose as a parasol.

Two years before Columbus discovered America Martin Chambiges found his life complicated by a call to Sens to make the lateral portails of the cathedral. His portails at Beauvais had made him the most sought-after man amongst architects, and so in the famous south façade of Sens may be seen something very similar to the south portal of Beauvais. Chambiges and eight workmen are said to have built it and it is in every way a worthy monument

to its designer, if anything more perfect than the great façade of its prototype. It has the same beautiful device of parallel lines running vertically up to its gable ; but what I think especially handsome is the proportion between the size of the great rose, which is greater here than at Beauvais, to the rest of the surface, the rose itself being exquisitely beautiful. This portail is called the Portail of Moses on account of the statue of the prophet which surmounts the gable of the entrance door. The niches for statuettes are now empty.

Seen from the entrance the interior of the cathedral of Sens gives an impression of grandeur. Its characteristics are purity of line, harmony of proportion, sobriety of decoration, and amplitude, with an abundance of light. It is a pity to hurry back to Paris by that afternoon train, a day or two more could be so well employed at Sens—there is an infinity of beauty here which can only in so short a time be touched upon. To begin with, Sens has an almost unique feature in the coupled columns of the alternate bays of the nave, choir, and apse. We shall see something similar to this in the choir of Coutances, but Sens makes more of it and the arrangement is not quite the same. These coupled columns were introduced into the Chapel of the Trinity at Canterbury, doubtless from the designs of Guillaume of Sens, by his successor, William the Englishman.

And while we are on the subject of columns do not fail to look at the capitals of the pillars of the ambulatory ; they are of great beauty and originality, especially one in which the motif is a pair of doves, their breasts turned outward, plucking at an ear of wheat. Numbers of these capitals reproduce the interlaced monsters so common in Roman design, others group real or fantastic animals inspired by Oriental fabrics. The most beautiful of the series are to be discovered in the north ambulatory ; upon one of these two lions seize each a goat ; in another winged dragons with serpents' tails interlaced devour a little creature whose hair stands on end.

Of the oldest glass in the cathedral there remain but four windows, in the north ambulatory, executed in about the year 1184, after a fire which destroyed the town and the cathedral. These four are of marvellous richness in colour and design and seem to belong to the same school as certain windows of Chartres, Bourges, and Canterbury. Of these the most famous is that one which relates in a series of thirteen round panels, the history of Thomas à Becket, who found refuge in the monastery of Sainte-Colombe near Sens for four years, during the time of his exile from England. This window takes up the life of the archbishop from the time that Louis VII brought about a reconciliation between him and Henry II of England, when he left Sens to return to Canterbury. The story begins in the lower left-hand panel with the scene of reconciliation and continues back and forth, from left to right, picturing the chief scenes in the saint's life after his sojourn at Sens and ending with his martyrdom, his sepulchre, and finally with Christ receiving his soul in Paradise. Whether originally this window was balanced by another, devoted to the early part of Becket's life, or whether it was made from a cartoon executed for the cathedral of Canterbury, are points upon which no information is obtainable.

The other windows contemporary with this one relate the Parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritain, and the History of Saint-Eustache. The latter, the lower half of which has been ably restored, is of great beauty and originality owing to its almond-shaped forms and its purity of colour. Cahier, in his *Monographie*, speaks in great praise of the Samaritain window of Sens which he considered a *chef-d'œuvre* amongst *chef-d'œuvres* and 'one of the most admirable windows of a cathedral where almost all are marvellous, at least in parts. I do not speak of the ornamentation because at Sens it is usually of the greatest style that can be found (I had almost said imagined), but the cleverness of the drawing in the execution of the figures seems to attain here the perfection of the contemporary statuary'.

The small Chapel du Sacré-Cœur is pointed out as the one in which was solemnized, in the year 1234, the marriage of Saint-Louis and Marguerite de Provence. In the first chapel of the apse is the tomb of the Dauphin, Louis XVI's father, who was buried in the choir, a work by the younger Guillaume Coustou. Near the Becket window is a thirteenth-century statue of Thomas of Canterbury. It was discovered in 1897 in the wall of a house near the cathedral in which the saint was said to have lived.

The great flamboyant roses of the transepts are of the latest Gothic period. The north window, representing the Triumph of Christ, surrounded by a multitude of angels bearing musical instruments and singing His praises, is of extraordinary beauty. Done during the early sixteenth century by artists of Troyes and Sens, whose names have been recorded, these great windows stand out as features of the church. From this school of glass painters the celebrated Jean Cousin, *père*, sprung. He was educated at Sens amongst the glass-workers there and made the fine window in the first chapel on the south side of the nave dedicated to Saint-Eutrope, the first Bishop of the diocese.

Saint-Etienne is one of the numerous churches restored by Viollet-le-Duc. Not content with putting things to rights after the devastations of the Revolution, he was inspired to suppress the rood-screen because it was of a later epoch than the original design and to tear down the large lateral chapels that had been added to the primitive structure at the end of the thirteenth century, replacing them by low chapels in the spirit of the earlier model.

The Becket window recalls the presence in the Treasure of the vestments of the martyred Archbishop, worn by him during his sojourn at Sens. Bumpus tells how the chasuble was mutilated some years ago to gratify a collector of souvenirs and how Cardinal Manning once tried it on. Sens has been particularly fortunate in preserving something of the riches of its Treasure. There are two charming rooms, reached by a picturesque little stairway in the

right wall over the Sacristy. Amongst the treasures here preserved are marvellous tapestries, princely gifts of Louis de Bourbon, the cardinal-archbishop, and others only less magnificent. The ivories of Sens are famous and include the liturgical comb of Saint-Loup, a formidable instrument which was used in preparing him for consecration. Saint-Loup was Bishop of Troyes in the fifth century. Another wonderful piece is an Arabian coffer with remarkable carvings and inscriptions from the Koran ; while of great value and rarity is a Byzantine reliquary, a Sainte-Chasse, with twelve faces and a top to match, carved with scenes from the lives of David and Joseph. This precious coffer, which dated at the latest from the tenth century, was doubtless brought from the Orient at the time of the Crusades.

## CHAPTER XII

### BOURGES

**I**F one were to take a compass and place one of its points upon the small dot on the map of France which indicates Bourges and measure distances from it with the other, it would be found that this city lies almost exactly in the geographical centre of France. It is directly south of Paris on a small branch line of railroad which connects Vierzon with Nevers. In a larger way as the crow flies it is between Tours and Dijon, dipping just a little south of the straight line that might be drawn between the two, while south of it and a little to the east are Vichy and Clermont Ferrand. The fact that it is off the beaten track and not on the main line of a railway has saved it from the great triumphal march of progress and preserved much of its ancient charm. It was the capital of Berry, one of the ancient provinces of France, and when the provinces were split up into *départements* it became the chief city of the Cher.

As for its ancient history Bourges is first spoken of in the year 52 B.C. as part of Caesar's domain. Until the fifth century it remained under Roman dominion, but after the battle of Vouillé, in which Clovis conquered and killed the king of the Visigoths, Bourges submitted to Clovis and was united to the kingdom of the Franks under Clotaire II, in the seventh century. Philippe I took possession of Bourges in 1102 and at this epoch the city was attached to the royal domain. Louis VII was crowned there on Christmas Day, 1137.

If there be anything in the psychology of names, does not that of Bourges suggest bigness, amplitude, generosity ?

No letters have been omitted to convey the idea of fullness, completeness—qualities which repeat themselves in the aspect of the expansive cathedral which, one of the vastest of France, seats its broad flanks astride the highest eminence of the town. Its proportions, already colossal, seem to be exaggerated by the wide stretch between the towers, by the absence of spires, by the five great doors which open from the main façade, by the gradations of the roof, in three levels, and by the absence of transepts in the huge unbroken bulk ; while inside, the lofty nave, prodigious in height, is wide open throughout its length, its five aisles running straight through and around the choir. There is a remarkable sense of space in this cathedral of Bourges.

These are things which anybody may see for himself, but it is also true, if less obvious, that the tremendous size of the nave is enhanced by the unity of its construction and by the sobriety of its ornamentation within, or rather its absence of all ornamentation. Nothing intervenes to obstruct the view or to distract attention from it. No transepts cut the perspective ; choir and nave succeed one another directly, and as one stands at the entrance, as stand one must, brought up short and for mere breath before this miracle of building, the end of the apse seems far away. This impression of length is accentuated by the grove, the forest of columns in parallel files which run the length, just as the impression of height is intensified by the elevation of the first line of pillars which support the triforium, rendered more elegant by the thin colonettes surrounding them which mask their robustness and at the same time increase the number of fine vertical lines as they mount with one spring to vertiginous heights with a boldness and lightness unsurpassed, if not unequalled, elsewhere.

The sole ornamentation of the interior is the series of windows, some dating from the origin of the church and others carrying out the history of glass to its decadence in the seventeenth century. On account of the exceptional arrangement of this church, by which each of the

five aisles has its different height, light is admitted through three series of windows whose glass, magnificently rich and effulgent, makes gorgeous rhythms of colour and diffuses the light throughout every corner of the vast interior. The earliest windows surround the outer aisle of the apse and fill the chapels of the ambulatory, forming a superb series of thirteenth-century glass in glorious reds and blues, comparable only to Chartres. Those of the clerestory are later and resemble somewhat the big windows of LeMans ; while others, still later, in the chapels of the nave are of great purity of colour and design.

The cathedral of Bourges is dedicated to Saint Stephen. It stands, like its predecessors, on the site of the palace of Léocade, who was governor of Aquitania at the time that Saint-Ursin came to this part of ancient Gaul to preach Christianity. The saint brought with him the relics of the first martyr from Rome, and the governor, being converted, authorized him to transform his palace into a sanctuary for the reception of the relics. The first church dated from about the third century ; others succeeded it, all bearing the name of Saint-Etienne (Saint Stephen), and each bettered its predecessor until we come to the cathedral raised in the first half of the twelfth century of which a few vestiges remain. This was the church in which Louis VII was crowned king of France, in 1137, and the two sculptured doors of the side entrances of the present edifice were part of it.

It is not perhaps surprising that little is known of the earlier churches which occupied the site, but it does seem strange that not much more is known of the building of the present cathedral. The name of the architect is unknown as well as the date upon which the work was begun, though it is surmised that this was in the time of the Archbishop Saint-Guillaume, or about the year 1200 or 1209. The church appears to have been a step behind Notre-Dame of Paris, with the plan of which that of Bourges presents certain analogies. This was the more natural since Guillaume's predecessor, Henri de Sully, was a brother



of Eudes de Sully, the archbishop of Notre-Dame who carried the Paris cathedral to completion. It is not until the year 1209 that we begin to have definite news of the building and then only indirectly. An old manuscript relates that in that year, when Guillaume was about to set forth upon a crusade against the Albigeois, he preached a farewell sermon to his flock in the cathedral, but since the place where he stood was 'open to the four winds' he was taken with a severe chill, followed by a violent fever, which carried him off shortly afterwards.

Now the archbishop's place would have been the pulpit at the side of the nave of the old cathedral, and for it to have been thus exposed the construction of the choir must have been well under way. As a rule, unless there were old churches which stood in the way, these cathedrals were begun at the choir and the old nave was allowed to stand until the new choir was finished in order that the congregation should not be without a place of worship. When the Archbishop Guillaume was canonized, in 1218, his body was taken from the crypt, where it had been deposited, and transferred to the new choir and his relics were placed in a gold shrine raised upon columns behind the high altar. This indicates that the choir, which had consequently been carried forward with considerable rapidity, must have been practically finished in 1218. At any rate, on the 5 May, 1324, the Archbishop Guillaume de Brosse dedicated the monument, so that the cathedral of Bourges was built in a little over a hundred years.

It was some years later than this that Jean, the third son of Jean le Bon, or John the Good, received the province of Berry as his portion of the apanage allowed to the younger sons of the royal house. This was an incident of great importance to Bourges and to the cathedral, for Jean de Berry was generous, ambitious, and a great amateur of Art, and he set to work to embellish the capital city of his province, which he made his chief seat, by building a palace and a Saint-Chapelle, and he completed the façade of the cathedral. But this was not all of his activity :

the great builder of the House of Valois, he had ample means with which to satisfy his taste, for besides being Duke of Berry he possessed the duchy of Auvergne and the countship of Poitou, and he built lavishly, palaces, châteaux, and chapels throughout his vast domains.

As Duke of Berry, besides what he did for Bourges, he built the châteaux of Mehun, Concressault, and Genouilly ; as Duke of Auvergne, the palace and Sainte-Chapelle of Riom, the châteaux of Monette and Usson, near Issoire ; and as Count of Poitou he erected the palace and château of Poitiers and the château of Lustignan. To him are also due other châteaux farther afield, at Etampes, at Gien, Montargis, Dourdan, Boulogne-sur-Mer, and Bicêtre, while in Paris he left an impressive souvenir in the celebrated Hôtel de Nesle.

It was in the year 1375 that Jean de Berry set about rebuilding the old Palais Royal where the viscounts of Bourges had lived and in which later Louis XI was to be born. It took the form of a long rectangle placed parallel to the Gallo-Roman wall, and from north to south it was more than two hundred yards in length. Part of its site is now covered by the Hôtel de Ville. At its northern extremity the Duke erected the famous Sainte-Chapelle which was to contain his tomb. One may judge of his power when it is known that this chapel was independent of the diocese in which it lay and, by an arrangement which the Duke made with Clement VIII, it sprung directly from the papal see. A piece of the true cross was given to it by the Duke's nephew, Charles VI. The chapel was consecrated in 1405 in the reign of this monarch.

We shall see souvenirs of the chapel in the cathedral, and all descriptions of Bourges refer to this wonderfully rich piece of ecclesiastical architecture. It was larger than the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris and the Sainte-Chapelle of Riom, in Auvergne, also built by Jean. The latter, which still stands, was a reduction from the chapel of Bourges, and it conveys an idea of the grandeur of the other. At the end of the round apse, behind the high altar, was the

altar of Notre-Dame la Blanche, with a group in white marble representing the Virgin holding the Infant, accompanied by two angels. On the right and left of this group were the kneeling statues of the Duke and his second wife, Jeanne de Boulogne.

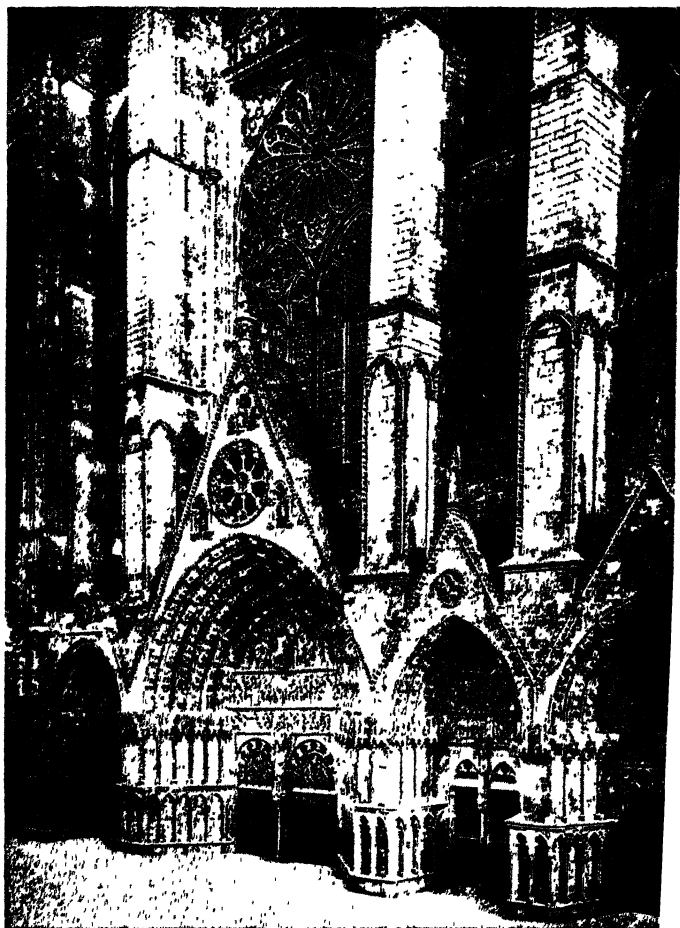
Jean de Berry died in 1416. His tomb was placed in the Sainte-Chapelle about the middle of the fifteenth century. It resembled somewhat the tombs executed at Dijon for the dukes of Bourgogne and those at Souvigny for the dukes of Bourbon. An effigy of the deceased in white marble, resting upon a block of the same material, lay upon a table of black marble. The recumbent figure, which represents the Duke in an ermine robe, wearing the coronet, his hands crossed upon his breast, appears to have been a realistic and faithful portrait. It was made by Jean de Rupy by order of the Duke's grand-nephew and heir, Charles VII. The feet rest upon a chained and muzzled bear, a symbol which is often found, with the device *le tems venra*, in the margins of the manuscripts illuminated for Jean de Berry. The lateral faces of the tomb were ornamented with niches containing alabaster statuettes of weepers: there were forty of these, representing officers of the Duke's household. Charles VII entrusted this part of the tomb to Etienne Bobillet and Paul de Mosselman, two excellent sculptors—the latter known for his work upon the stalls of the Rouen cathedral.

The chapel was destroyed in 1757 by order of Louis XV, who spared the tomb, however, and had it transported to its present resting-place in the crypt of the cathedral. As for the other contents of the chapel they wandered far afield. Louis XV himself took from it the highly suggestive portrait of Charles VII, which now hangs in the room of French Primitives in the Louvre. The altar of Notre-Dame la Blanche with its statuary was installed in the Virgin's chapel of the cathedral, but when the Revolution made havoc of this, breaking off the heads of the statues and mutilating the rest, parts of the ensemble were scat-

tered, never to find their way back. The two angels which guarded the Mother and Child, so remarkable for their expression, are now in the museum, together with ten of the eighteen weepers saved from the tomb. The tomb itself was disfigured. The recumbent figure in the crypt suffered mutilation about the head and face, but it was not ruined altogether and is still a commanding monument. Near it are two large kneeling figures in stone, portraits of Jean de Berry and Jeanne de Boulogne, from the entrance of the Sainte-Chapelle.

Aside from the effigy of the Duke upon his tomb in the crypt, the most interesting of all the sculpture of the Sainte-Chapelle is the second pair of kneeling statues of the Duke and Duchess now placed before the restored Virgin's Chapel. They too are probably from the chisel of Jean de Rupy, the sculptor of the effigy. They lost their heads at the time of the Revolution, and in 1844, when the chapel was put in order, they were restored. It is still possible to discover on the bookstalls of Bourges postcards of these statues as they appeared after this 'restoration', rudely done and showing the Duke and Duchess with grotesquely clumsy, ill-assorted heads. Then something interesting occurred. It was found that Holbein had visited Bourges in its palmy days and had seen the originals, for among the treasures in the museum of Bâle, where the greater part of this artist's work is preserved, there are two charming drawings of the figures in all their perfection. The heads which now complete these statues were made from the Holbein drawings in 1913.

Jean de Berry's greatest gift to Bourges was the façade of the cathedral. This he terminated in about the year 1390, when his architect, Guy de Dammartin, added the great windows which occupy all the width of the central part that corresponds to the nave. This feature, known as the *grand houstean*, was so much admired that it was copied in the cathedrals of Tours and Le Mans. The tympanum of the central door, representing the usual scene of the Last Judgment, is one of the most celebrated pieces



BOURGES  
THE GRAND HOUSTEAU—WEST PORTAIL



of religious sculpture which has survived the Middle Ages. It will repay as much time as one is disposed to give it, in spite of its obvious restoration, as on no other church is the theme rendered so moving and so pathetic. The tympanum is divided into three registers: in the lower one is the resurrection of the dead; in the middle, the souls are being weighed by a great angel who stands between the elect and the damned; and in the top Christ sits on his throne in the character of divine Judge.

The great singularity of the façade, aside from the *grand houstean* which is truly superb and original here, is the five doors instead of the usual three, with their pointed gables. The central one is the great type; the others repeat its arrangement and relate the history of the Virgin, of Saint-Etienne, of Saint-Guillaume, and of Saint-Ursin. The latter was the first Bishop of Bourges: one may discover him in the panels of his tympanum receiving his mission from Saint Peter with his friend Saint Just; one may see him burying Saint Just, who died on the way; here he walks alone towards Berry, carrying his precious box containing the relics of Saint Stephen; there he is preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of Bourges. Again, in the next panel he converts Léocade, the governor of Aquitania, and his son; he consecrates the first church dedicated to Saint Stephen; he baptizes Léocade and his son. These stories are all borne out in every detail by the Golden Legend.

The arches over the doors shelter a quantity of statues in bands or rows which terminate at each end by the lacy canopies of the now almost empty niches, once filled with statues of the apostles, under which ran a frieze of bas-reliefs between the columns of a slender arcade which forms a sort of surbase. Had all this sculpture come down to us intact we should see here a marvellous page of thirteenth and fourteenth-century Art.

The porches over the two lateral entrances date from the end of the thirteenth century and are of exceeding interest, large, square and with round arches of extreme

elegance. The doors to which they give access are, as we know, relics of the twelfth-century church which immediately preceded the present edifice. They date from about the year 1160 and are superb specimens of their epoch, comparing, in style and richness of iconography, with the contemporary portails of Angers, Le Mans, Chartres, Notre-Dame of Etampes, and some minor churches. The sculptures of these doors, flanked by quaint, ancient statues of saints accompanied by a wealth of medieval imagery in stone, have fortunately been little restored, though they show the marks of injuries received at the hands of the Protestants in the sixteenth century. Slender, archaic, eloquent personages, they seem to speak of those fateful times, yet to bear their indignities with serenity. What a marvellous thing is a great work of Art ! One may deface the exterior, mutilate its members, crash off its features—its soul stands firm. These ancient personages of Bourges, in their stiff draperies, their slippered feet, their nimbed heads, with their wide expressive eyes, their measured gestures, seem to seek communion with us across the ages. If we have lost the key to their utterances the fault is ours, for what they have to say was plain enough to the faithful of their generation.

The religious wars of the middle of the sixteenth century did particular violence to the cathedral of Bourges. Up to that time its façade offered an ensemble whose magnificence we can now only imagine. On the 27 May, 1562, Gabriel de Lorges, Count of Montgomery, took the city by surprise, and his troops commenced at once a systematic pillage. The following day was particularly disastrous. The Huguenot fanatics began to tear down the statues of the portails by means of cords passed behind them and to smash with hammers the figures of the reliefs. It is recorded that their ardour was only equalled by their imprudence and that the heavy statues fell upon the profaners inflicting the most severe injuries. A voice rose in the midst of the crowd proposing to throw down the vast edifice itself, and this was indeed begun. Already one of the enormous



pillars at the entrance to the nave had been attacked at its base and the vandals were about to apply powder to blow it up when the voice of a moderator prevailed and they were persuaded to save the church for a temple of their own faith. At the same time all the signs of the Catholic cult were ravished and done away with ; even the tombs were not respected, and the precious relics of Saint-Guillaume were burned and their ashes thrown to the four winds. The rood-screen, the works of Art which embellished the altars, the Treasure—nothing was spared. The fragments of shrines, sacred vases, and the like, that the Count of Montgomery carried off for his own part of the booty, weighed 651 marcs.<sup>1</sup>

But in our zeal to denounce the vandals of an opposing religion we must not overlook the depredations of the clergy itself, nor the pains which they took, in the eighteenth century, to destroy the beauty of their church. The canons spent untold wealth in tearing out the ancient features of their choir and in replacing them with modern furnishings. To finance these operations they sold their priceless tapestries, melted down all the vases and other silverware not in actual use, and even burned the discarded altar cloths and vestments in order to obtain the gold and silver with which they were interwoven. But the worst of their villainy was the taking out, in 1760, of some of the ancient glass of the first aisle of the choir which represented the sainted bishops of Bourges. This was done under the pretext of making the church lighter.

The Revolution in its turn did not fail to devastate and pillage the cathedral, and it was at this time that the choir enclosure was demolished, and such statues as the Huguenots had left intact were systematically broken. Closed in 1793 and then turned into a temple of Unity, this cathedral which had convened a national council presided over by the Cardinal Saint-Ange, legate of Honorius III, and to which Louis VIII had been bidden, in 1225 ; this cathedral within whose walls so many important questions of

<sup>1</sup> Nearly five hundred pounds.

religious discipline had been decided, was on the point of complete demolition at the hands of a fanatical and ignorant mob.

The Revolutionists were not to be moved by the memory of the seven cardinals who counted amongst the number of its archbishops and cared less that its prelates, according to the cartularies of Charlemagne, had the right to anoint and to crown. It was not such considerations as these which saved the old cathedral from ruin, but the practical report of the chief engineer of the department which declared that the cost of taking it down would far exceed the possible receipts from the sale of the materials of which it was made. In an age of 'Reason' this argument was unanswerable; the mob turned its attention into more profitable channels, and the cathedral soon after was restored to the cult.

Ruskin advised hurried visitors to Amiens to spend all of their time in the cathedral choir. This was excellent advice. Amongst the riches that these cathedrals possess it is not always so easy to pick out the supremely essential thing. However, if the wood-carving at Amiens stands out pre-eminently in that splendid church, so, with the exception of Chartres, there are no windows in France, if indeed in the whole world, to compare with the series at Bourges.

While Chartres is richer in glass of the thirteenth century, the windows of Bourges permit us to follow step by step the evolution of the art from its origin to the epoch of its decline, and so the church forms an incomparable museum of glass painting. The windows of the ambulatory and the choir throughout are thought to date from about the year 1220, and some of them offer striking analogies to those of the cathedral of Chartres, while others bear equally strong resemblance to those of Tours, Le Mans, Sens, Rouen, Canterbury, and Lincoln. There was in the early years of the thirteenth century a large glass manufactory at Chartres, and no doubt this atelier furnished the artists who embellished these cathedrals.

Since the glass of the choir and ambulatory is the most beautiful, it deserves our first and best attention. The subjects follow a definite order, admirably understood. The highest windows, those in the central portion, over the high altar, contain on the north side the series of the prophets: these are colossal in size and possess a rude and savage grandeur. The personages depicted follow the line of all those who announced the coming of Christ, from Moses to John the Baptist. In the centre the Virgin is pictured, holding the Infant in her arms. She is followed, on the south side, by representations of the apostles who were sent forth to preach the Gospel to all nations. Thus John the Baptist stands on her right, while Saint Stephen, patron of the cathedral, stands on her left hand, followed by Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint Andrew, Saint John, Saint James the Great, Saint Philip, Saint Thomas, Saint Bartholomew, Saint Matthew, Saint Simon, Saint James the Less, Saint Barnabas, Saint Thaddeus, Saint Mark, Saint Luke, and finally, to finish the series, three disciples of the apostles.

The windows of the first aisle, a storey lower, and again surrounding the choir, continue this line of personages by representing the canonized bishops of Berry. It is here that we see those gaps in the series where eighteen windows were taken out in 1760 by the clergy on the grounds that they obstructed the light; unfortunately of the eight that remain only three have been identified with certitude: two are on the left side and represent Saint-Ursin and Saint-Sulpice-Sévère, while one on the right pictures Saint-Guillaume.

In the second aisle and chapels of the ambulatory the windows deal with the interpretation of the scriptures, the preaching of the Gospel, the conversion of the world, and the evangelical counsels put in practice by the lives of the saints. This series is the most curious and contains the most celebrated window of the collection, which is called the *vitrail de la Nouvelle-Alliance*, a subject which found frequent expression at this time. It compares, in a series

of small scenes, the mystic concordance between the Old and the New Testaments.

The little scenes which narrate the lives of the saints, and of which the principal source is the Golden Legend, are the most frequent and are pictured with a quaint fidelity. The Joseph window is one of the handsomest, and it is the only one whose subject is taken from the Old Testament. There is a magnificent panel representing Joseph's dream. It is a square set on its angle : across the centre Joseph lies sleeping, above him are the bundles of wheat, the stars, the sun, and the moon. The whole story follows in detail, and the window is striking by reason of its rich blue and red glass.

A particularly amusing and rare window is to be found in the fifth choir chapel designated as the Chapel of the Holy Cross. The subject is one of the most piquant of the stories narrated in the Golden Legend ; it concerns Saint Mary the Egyptian, a courtesan of Alexandria who, having heard of the Cross which was being exhibited in Jerusalem, made up her mind to go there to see what this curiosity might be. She made an easy bargain with the boatmen who conveyed her across, and soon found her way to the place where the faithful were gathered in adoration of the relic. She was one of those who came to scoff but remained to pray, for she had not been long in the presence before she was overcome by emotion and knelt down with the others. While she prayed a pilgrim came to her and, slipping three small coins into her hand, he told her to go into the desert on the other side of the Jordan and repent of her sins.

She did so and, as the legend runs, when her clothes fell in tatters her hair grew long and covered her, and when she had eaten the three loaves, which she had purchased with the bits of silver, they were miraculously renewed. She had lived in the desert for forty years when the anchorite Zozime, who had heard of a saintly hermit dwelling in the desert, came to see her. When he left his boat on the banks of the river he saw nothing but a strange

figure burned black with the sun and covered with long hair. He had never seen anything like this before and did not recognize it as the hermit, but nevertheless 'pursued it with all the force of his legs'. When Mary saw that she could not outstrip this hardy runner, she stopped and turning her head over her shoulder cried out: 'Abbot Zozime, why do you run after me? Excuse me if I cannot turn towards you, it is because I am a woman and quite naked. Throw me your cloak that I may cover myself and speak to you without shame.' Zozime tossed her the coat, and they had a long talk in which Mary relates the story of her life in Alexandria and her years of penitence in the desert. Zozime is much impressed and finally gives her his blessing, and after promising to return at Easter to give her the holy sacrament, he gets into his boat and rows away.

Then comes the pathetic part of the story. When Zozime, true to his word, comes again he sees no trace of the Egyptian. After searching well he finds her lying dead upon the sands, but she has left him a message asking him to give her a pious burial. Poor Zozime is distressed, and whilst he is wondering what he can do about this a lion walks calmly out of the bush and he sees the solution. 'My friend', says Zozime to the lion, 'lend me a hand here with the burial of this saintly woman, for old as I am and having no spade I am incapable of digging her grave without help.' The lion with his great paws soon hollows out a grave, and the two lay poor Mary in it and cover her over with the sand. Then the lion walks away, 'gentle as a lamb'.

Is it not a pretty little legend? One may follow it step by step in the panels of the window, which are singularly vivacious. We see Mary first standing before her house in Alexandria inviting the passers-by to enter. One of these has a sly smirk upon his evil face. We follow her to the boat which is to carry her across the river, and through every incident related by the legend, until after the burial she is received in Abraham's bosom—he holding her in a

sort of serviette, as people sometimes jump from burning houses into a sheet. There was an old street in Paris called Rue de la Jussienne. It was so named because of a chapel which stood there dedicated to Sainte Marie l'Egyptienne, as the French styled her. This name had degenerated in common parlance to simply *la Jussienne*. A series of windows was rescued from this church when it was demolished, but all trace of them has been lost. From descriptions of them that have survived they appear to have depicted in detail the incidents in the life of this reformed courtesan, who was a popular saint and one upon whose lively history the artists of the thirteenth century loved to dwell.

Bourges is such a comfortable city that one may well settle down here for long enough to enjoy in a leisurely fashion its dedoubtable sights. The Hôtel de France, not far from the station, is an excellent hostelry with all the comforts and a good table; the Hôtel Central is better placed, opposite the famous palace of Jacques Cœur. The latter, together with the Hôtels Lallement and Cujas (now the museum), is of supreme interest, but there are many other beautiful houses. Jacques Cœur's palace is one of the most sumptuous monuments of civil architecture of the fifteenth century. Its owner was the celebrated minister of finance under Charles VII, the son of a humble furrier who by his genius for business acquired an enormous fortune. Charles VII appointed him *argentier* to the crown in 1438 and ennobled him two years later. But he was not allowed to enjoy his prosperity, for it must be known that Jacques Cœur figures amongst those currently believed to have possessed the secret of transmutation, a secret to which he owed, so it was said, his immense wealth. He fell upon evil days when, through the machinations of the jealous nobility, he was accused of having poisoned *la belle Agnès*, the King's favourite. This villainy was doubtless in order to get rid of an importunate creditor, for Jacques Cœur lent money to numerous seigneurs, and even to the King. He was despoiled of his possessions on the

strength of this infamous charge, banished, and died miserably on the island of Chio. His memory was rehabilitated by Louis XI.

One of the chapels of the nave of the cathedral is called after Jacques Cœur, who founded it in 1447. It is easily recognizable for the richness of its ornamentation and by a little recess built in the wall under the window, lighted by a small opening, and enclosed by an elegant arcade. In this oratory the *argentier* and his wife took their places on grand occasions. The founder, having died in exile, was not interred in the chapel, and it was acquired in 1552 by Claude de l'Aubespain, Baron of Châteauneuf. Magnificent kneeling statues of three of his descendants, by Philippe de Buyster, one of the greatest sculptors of the seventeenth century, have their place in the chapel. They are fragments of a monument erected to their memory, destroyed by the Revolutionists. François Mansart was the architect.

Another interesting person associated with the history of Bourges was Jeanne de France, a daughter of Louis XI. Although she had sterling qualities of heart and spirit she had none of those charms which please the eye, being small rather than tall, badly made, and a little lame. Louis XI neglected her as the least loved of his children and took no pains with her education. Nevertheless this prince, by one of those contradictions of his character, destined her for the Duke of Orléans, the first prince of the blood and in line for the throne after his own son, to the prejudice of Anne, his eldest daughter, whom he married to a younger son of the House of Bourbon. The motives which determined Louis to such conduct, if we are to believe historians, were his interest in Anne's marriage and the natural hatred he felt for all princes of the blood. Jeanne was not likely to have progeny and the King did not dissimulate his malice. The marriage was celebrated in 1476: Jeanne was twelve and Louis fourteen years of age.

Louis XI was succeeded by his son, Charles VIII, who after a short reign died leaving the crown to the Duke of Orléans, who now became Louis XII. He had always

despised his wife and, after her father's death, had repudiated her. But now his predecessor's demise left a rich widow upon whose estates Louis XII cast envious eyes. This was Anne of Brittany. She was easily persuaded to give up the rôle of dowager queen to resume her place as reigning consort of the new King, and Louis arranged with Alexander VI for the annulment of his marriage on the trumped-up grounds that it had never been consummated and also that he and Jeanne were spiritual relations. The Queen submitted and Louis, charmed with her moderation, gave her the Duchy of Berry with other domains and a large pension. She chose Bourges for her retreat, consecrated herself to God and founded there the order of the Annonciade. Miracles were attributed to her. She renounced the title of princess and died as Duchess of Berry, in 1505. After her death she was canonized, and one of the chapels of the cathedral bears her name, Sainte-Jeanne de Valois.

The museum treasures a death-mask of the unfortunate princess and also a marble bust of her, together with the inscription formerly marking her tomb—destroyed by the Revolutionists.



## CHAPTER XIII

### ALBI

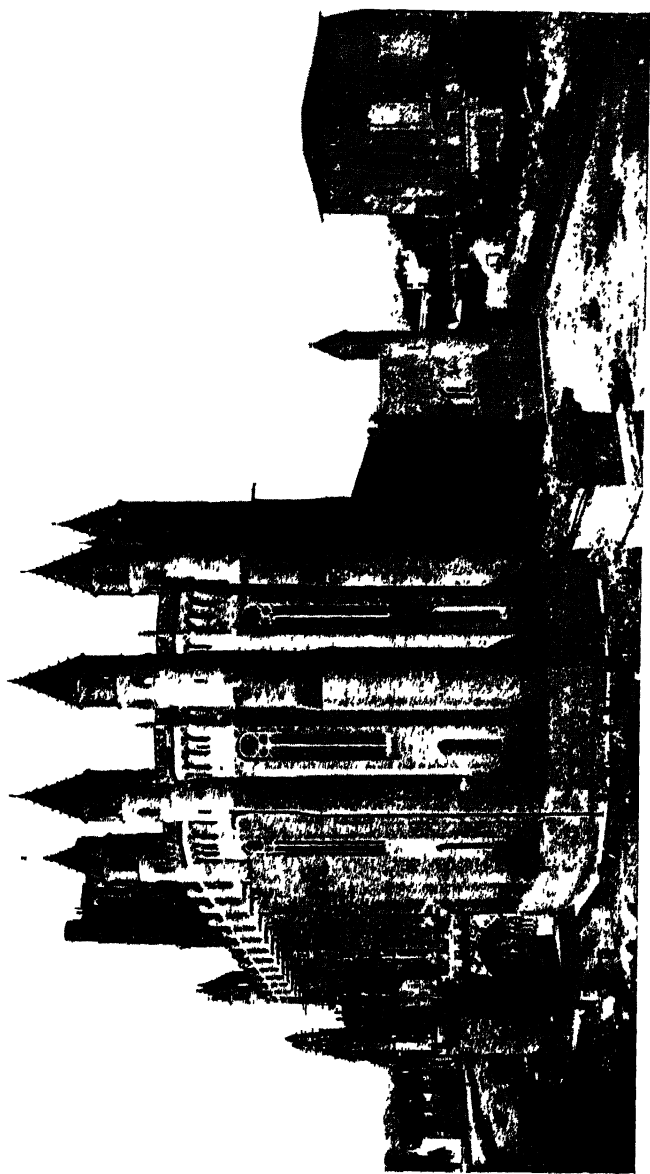
IF there is a character in the *Golden Legend* which stands out above all others as a symbol of gentleness and grace, it is Saint Cecilia, the patron of musicians, who by her tender eloquence 'changed to the gentlest of lambs the spouse whom she had accepted as an untamable lion'. And if, by contrast, one were asked to name, amongst the cathedrals of France, the one which appears most war-like, least in harmony with the disposition of the saint, who would not immediately think of Albi? Surely the blessed lady, when she paused for a moment in her celestial concert, must have deplored the bellicose aspect of the cathedral dedicated to her.

Sainte-Cécile is a sturdy, gigantesque, brick construction, more feudal fortress than church of the most finished type of Gothic architecture to be found in the south of France. One has only to see it once to remember forever its imperious silhouette, which, standing somewhat back from the banks of the Tarn, dominates the admirable landscape of this beautiful region. Albi is unhappily one of the most inaccessible of French cities. Tucked away, remote from the main lines of travel, to visit its cathedral one must always make a *détour*, yet it attracts annually its quota of admirers, for no one who has ever seen it, or even read about it, will fail to recommend it for its picturesque situation, for the curiosity of its technique, if one may so express oneself, for the originality and richness of its decoration within, which make it a monument apart, unique of its kind, totally different from the rest.

It has so many points of interest, so many originalities and eccentricities, that the puzzle is where to begin one's eulogy. After one begins to know its history a little, there appears to be much to explain its sinister, gaunt, amazing, monstrous architecture. It has extraordinary bulk, and indeed, if one were to think of attacking it, it would be hard to say where there may be a vulnerable point in its elusive surface. Its aspect as one first comes upon it through narrow, winding streets, or as one first sees it from the train, which crosses a very fine viaduct below its walls, is strange and exciting. It might be some prehistoric monster, some mastadon cast up from remoter ages, rearing a great head from robust flanks, standing weird and disoriented, proud and baffled, at bay and defiant, in a century void of points of contact.

No northern influences have touched it. It derives from the churches of the lower city of Carcassonne, the ancient cathedral of Toulouse, religious monuments without side aisles which were themselves an application of the quasi-Roman constructions of Fréjus, of Notre-Dame-des-Doms of Avignon, of the old 'Major' of Marseilles, reminiscent of the basilica of Constantine at Rome. If Albi is Gothic in execution it is completely Roman—even antique—as to plan and structure. The Gothic style here is only a concession to the taste of the time, the application of a foreign convention, not a necessary outward expression of internal truths.

The exterior, defended on its western front by a lofty tower, its sides and apse pierced by high windows of exceeding thinness, is bare of ornament. All its surfaces are round in the manner of the medieval fortress. The walls rise uniformly straight to their height without flying buttresses; the narrow windows are mere slits for light as in ancient donjons and they are placed high beyond the reach of normal missiles; between the windows are rounded surfaces, semicircular walls again rising to the top and projecting in such a way as to shield the



ALBI. SAINTE CÉCILE  
THE APSE



openings. The smaller windows underneath the long ones are modern additions introduced, greatly to the detriment of the fine, massive base, in order to give light to the chapels. The square tower, tapering to octagon, grows from four huge, round bastions whose formidable mass protects the front. There is no façade, no portail, properly speaking, no entrance of any kind in the western end, and here is one of the many oddities of the building.

To understand the forbidding aspect of this cathedral one must review a little the terrible history of the viscounty of Albigeois, of which Albi was the capital, the fief of the counts of Toulouse. From the twelfth century on its bishops, the first of whom appears to have lived in about the third century, began to encroach upon the authority of the viscounts. The state of the ancient church, the predecessor of the present edifice, showed conclusively that nothing equalled strong walls for insuring respect for the house of God. Arnaud Catalan, one of the inquisitors of this epoch, had been obliged to take refuge there in 1234 against the fury of the crowd, and was thus able to excommunicate the whole city with some sense of security. After the Albigensian war the estates of the viscounts passed to Simon de Montfort, and then to the crown of France. By a convention, concluded in 1264, the chief temporal power in the city was granted to the bishop. It was in order to sustain his position that the terrible Bernard de Castanet, when he became Bishop in 1277, resolved to build a cathedral which would afford him perfect safety. His predecessors, during the rigours of war, had been more than once obliged to seek the protection of the sanctuary against the fury of the bourgeois in revolt.

And it was not by gentleness that Bernard de Castanet intended to lead his flock. This holy inquisitor hung, walled up alive, and tortured rich citizens whose fortunes he confiscated. His methods were so efficacious that, according to the Dominicans, at the end of the thirteenth

century there were not fifty heretics in the whole of Languedoc. Not a week passed, says Hauréau, without some notable of Albi being seized, tortured, or immured (in the strict sense of the word). The goods of the richest citizens were, one after another, confiscated and a large part appropriated to swell the already colossal revenues of the bishopric. Bernard de Castanet in his capacity of '*inquisiteur de la foi dans son diocèse et de vice-gérant de l'inquisiteur du royaume de France*' was absolute: but every dog has his day, and Castanet's day came to an end like the others. When Pope Clément finally was induced to inquire into the proceedings at Albi his prelates liberated many unfortunates whom they found chained in the narrow cells of the episcopal prison, 'without air, without light, having awaited their trials for five years and more'.

If the faith was not without enemies in the region, the Bishop himself had plenty, and behind the most ardent adversary of the inquisitors, Bernard Délicieux the Franciscan, stood the most notable citizens of Albi: a consul, a relation of the Bishop, the canons of Sainte-Cécile and of Saint-Salvi. Reaction against Bernard de Castanet rose to such a point that he was assailed and outraged by the populace and his life was menaced.

Is it to be wondered then that the church, conceived in the midst of such strife, by such a man, should show the influence of the circumstances and the character which inspired it? Its formidable mass seems to be still impregnated with the imperious and violent soul of the Bishop who ordered the construction. On the other hand, the double character of its destiny is not to be forgotten. It was at once the spiritual head of the diocese and the temporal lord of the city. It took part in innumerable conflicts of jurisdiction, of prerogatives, of property, which arose constantly at the instigation of royal officers, neighbouring lords, municipal magistrates and regular and secular clergy. It had sometimes to sustain and sometimes to combat the most turbulent of

chapters in continual dispute with the faithful. To see the venerable canons who officiate now in peace, under the great roof, one can scarcely imagine the adventurous spirit which animated their predecessors in medieval times. In 1356 the Pope was obliged to take sides with the Bishop against the revolt of the chapter, which had sacked the episcopal palace and taken military occupation of the cathedral, 'making the house of God a den of brigands'. The next year the canons and other dependents of the church were surprised in the act of making an armed raid upon the garnered wheat outside the city. In 1394 a band of assassins, amongst whom were a canon and an archdeacon, made an armed attack upon the knights of the order of Saint John of Jerusalem; the murderers took refuge in the cathedral where no one dared to touch them.

The cathedral itself was often attacked, and in 1436 the adherents of Bernard de Casilhac, who disputed the episcopal seat with Robert Dauphin, forced the doors; while in 1562 its defence was seriously put to the test when a Protestant army besieged the city. The canons walled up their doors and guarded it night and day. They built a strong tower provisioned with artillery directed against the city, and while they thus held the inhabitants at bay, imposed new taxes at their ease.

One of the finest views of Albi is from the other side of the Tarn at a point where its profile dominates the great mass of the terraces of the ancient palace of the bishops. From this position the inutility of façade and western entrances is at once understood. The cathedral is built at the point of a steep promontory at the confluence of the Tarn and a small tributary of that river, the Monbidou. To build it the summit of the hill had to be levelled off and the slopes embanked. There is little artificial foundation, the layers of bricks are simply attached to the bare rock. The place chosen, between the donjon and the older church, of which few vestiges remain, was considerably restricted. The jurisdiction of

the bishop stopped at the ramparts, before the neighbouring fief of Castel-Viel, and here was laid the deep bed of the great tower in order that the church should be oriented, according to the strict rule, with its apse towards the rising sun.

Since there was no possibility of an entrance at the usual place, at the end of the nave, the grand entrance was made on the south side, the only point accessible from the city, and to reach it, a steep grade was made. This anomaly is one of the most interesting of the cathedral's originalities and contributes greatly to its picturesque effect. Mounting the ramp one arrives at a fortified door, defended by battlements and ornamented with statues : it was built by Bishop Dominique de Florence in the fifteenth century, and bears his name. A wide stone stairway mounts easily towards the *Baldaqin*, a sort of triumphal parvis, whose open arch, in the most magnificent flamboyant style, confers majesty upon this entrance.

This porch is a veritable dais carried on columns in advance of the church. Built of white stone it stands out picturesquely against the pink brick of the cathedral and the blue of the southern sky. Its position, so well chosen, at the top of a long flight of steps, makes it one of the most imposing entrances imaginable, and Viollet-le-Duc, who wrote a little eulogy upon it, considered it one of the most beautiful porches of its epoch, as it is one of the last works of the Middle Ages. Originally the entrance here was a very modest door in character with the brick construction and easily walled up in times of stress. On the other side another door, since closed but whose place is marked by a simple brick arch, gave access to the bishop's palace and the cloisters.

The extraordinary beauty of the stone porch and elaborately carved canopy, which contrast strangely with the general plainness of the monument, makes a little preface to an interior for the magnificence of which one is otherwise ill prepared. If at Beauvais one stops short



at the entrance, transfixed by the sense of prodigious altitude and space, at Albi one is not less breathless before its amazing interior. We enter by the north door into an immense room which is all nave, without columns, without aisles, without transepts. The choir cuts the nave into two equal parts and is shut off by a splendid rood-screen of the most delicate elegance. The nave is ninety-eight feet high by sixty-one feet wide. Its width, which is great as compared with the churches of the north, is very striking, though these proportions are classic in the south. The vaulting is marvellously supported by the spring of the arch, in itself very handsome. All round the church are chapels divided by pilasters, and here we see one of the unhappy alterations in the original plan, for these chapels, now double, that is to say one over the other, were meant to rise in one flight to the roof, giving the building a sense of greater height. The whole inner surface of the cathedral is covered with gorgeous decoration.

With the exception of Amiens and Auch no church in France offers a choir so magnificently rich in sculpture. It was about one hundred and twenty years after the consecration of the cathedral, when the great work was nearly terminated, with the exception of the steeple whose building went along to the seventeenth century, that Bishop Louis I, Cardinal d'Amboise, nephew of the minister of Louis XIII, began the construction of the choir. This was about the year 1500. This date has been arrived at by the presence of the arms of Louis d'Amboise here and there together with the fleur-de-lis and the ermine. These latter symbols were in honour of Louis XII and Anne of Brittany, who were married in 1499 with the connivance of the Cardinal, who pronounced the annulment of the King's former marriage with the unfortunate Jeanne de Valois.

While so many of the cathedrals of France lost the original beauties of their choirs through the vandalism of the clergy, the depredations of the Revolutionists, or

other misfortunes, in the eighteenth century, Sainte-Cécile has kept her choir almost intact and one is fairly bewildered by its wealth of sculpture and carving, of which the monumental feature is the rood-screen. The *jubé* of Sainte-Cécile stretches like a sumptuous embroidery across the whole width of the nave, veiling the choir and lifting to about half the height of the vaulting of the roof its efflorescent pinnacles over exquisite arches and a rich canopied porch. Upon its face one may count, unhappily empty, the niches for ninety-six statues, either never placed or disappeared during the Revolution. A large Christ remains, accompanied by the Virgin and the Beloved Disciple, and, under these, two admirable figures of Adam and Eve. The Drama of the Redemption was no doubt intended to have been represented on this façade.

Of a style rather later than the *Baldaquin*, the elegance and precision of its lines are of a prodigious mastery. Tradition says that Richelieu, in 1629, climbed a ladder to assure himself that the graceful foliage and delicate chiselling of its surfaces were not painted plaster; while still more recently, in 1863, Crozes gravely instituted a chemical and geological examination by experts to prove that there was no deception. Stone is the only material employed, soft stone, it is true, like chalk as it comes from the quarry, but growing hard upon exposure to the air. Prosper Mérimée, who disliked *jubés* in general because he thought that they 'dwarfed a church', or stood 'like big furniture in a small room', found the screen of Sainte-Cécile of an elegance and perfection of workmanship which silenced criticism. All admiration before its beauty he 'felt ashamed to be reasonable in the presence of this magnificent folly'.

To the right and left, the white stone enclosure, delicately toned, like old ivory, continues its flamboyant course around the ambulatory, embracing the choir and sanctuary. On the outside it makes a series of accolades with blind foliage terminating in rich finials. Here the

statues are all in place, not one is missing. Each pilaster, elaborately studied, forms a niche which shelters a personage of the Old Testament, usually to be identified by the scriptural text engraved upon a scroll which mingles with the hem of his garment. These figures, of the Burgundian School, show traces of polychrome decoration, of gilding, and time has embellished them with a beautiful patina. Their realism, their character, the vivacity and variety of their expression and gesture, the elegance of their dress, make them living personages of their century. Without pretending to choose amongst so many masterpieces one may draw attention to David, to Esther, to Isaiah, to Jeremiah, to Judith, to Joas, and certainly to Simeon, between two adorable angels at the extreme rear. These statues have a meaning which we shall come to later and each personality was chosen with special intent. As one makes the round of the ambulatory and comes to the left-hand exit in the *jubé*, there is a delicious composition of the Annunciation: the Virgin stands before a pulpit and turns attentively towards a kneeling angel, who, from a neighbouring pier, salutes her and transmits the divine message.

Behind the *jubé* and within the enclosure, the choir forms a little independent church with doors on the north and south aisles, breaking the continuity of the screen. Statues of Constantine and Charlemagne surmount these doors, which, like those of the *jubé*, have kept their *grilles* and their precious locks intact. From the inside the crowning of the enclosure is really extraordinary: in a profusion of elaborate stone carving of the utmost felicity are mingled dais, flèches, steeples, crosses, fleurs-de-lis, escutcheons cut in openwork. Foliage twines in all parts, birds peck at it, snails glide through it, rabbits feed upon it, monkeys gather grapes.

Inside the choir, on the reverse side of these pedestals whose niches shelter the personages of the Old Testament, are complementary figures from the Gospels, figures which prove the theory of the *Nouvelle Alliance*, the theory that

the Old Law was but the preface and forerunner of the New. To this we have already seen allusions in the imagery of the windows of Bourges, and indeed this demonstration of parallelism in the two histories was one of the great preoccupations of the religious Art of the Middle Ages. To take a few instances: in the place of honour in the middle of the sanctuary, with her back to the east, is the Virgin holding the divine Infant in her arms; behind her is Simeon, whose honour it was to carry Jesus and who thus symbolizes the transition between the Old and the New Testaments. To the right and left of the Virgin follow John the Baptist, Saint Paul, and then the twelve apostles. Opposing John, who salutes the coming of the Lamb, Jacob prophesies the birth of the Messiah; Saint Paul is back to back with Zachariah; Peter with Jeremiah; Andrew with David; etc. This matter, which I can only touch upon thus cursorily, is one of extreme interest and worthy of considerable attention.

The western end of the choir is furnished with one hundred and twenty carved wood stalls in two rows, for the high and the low chapters. Simple but elegant and perfectly preserved, they form a sober surbase for the most charming frieze of angels imaginable. All along the top of the stalls, in little wrought niches, this astonishing band of angels, with sweet little faces, with gold wings, splendidly dressed, having each its personality, its attitude, its gesture, carrying each musical instrument or monograms of Christ and the Virgin, streamers, the instruments of the Passion, forms a whole celestial world admirably ranged and remarkably living. These are amongst the unforgettable things of Albi: they detach somewhat plaintively, if altogether adorably and delightfully, from a painted background in faded blues and reds, while above them rise those dais and pinnacles in an exultant flight towards the vaulting. Above the central door, which opens on grand occasions into the nave, as though directing the celestial choir, stands the

patron saint herself, Cecilia, the martyr's palm in her right hand, the organ under her left arm, a crown of roses in her gilded hair.

In most cathedrals the scene of the Last Judgment figures in the sculpture of the western façade ; but Sainte-Cécile has no west portail, and the great scene was consequently painted on the reverse side in the interior of the nave. The wall here is curious since the two inner towers, of the four which make the base for the steeple, obtrude their bulk into the church, making a surface of two huge, round protuberances with a space between. This great fresco, in its original state one of the most remarkable as well as perhaps the largest in the world, was formerly in itself worth the journey to Albi. It measured sixty-five by forty-eight feet. A magnificent specimen of French Art, notably earlier than the Italian frescoes which surround it, it differs greatly from these by its order, its sobriety, its drawing, and technique. The colour is laid upon a thin glaze through which the outline of the bricks is plainly visible. On a background of soft green the personages of the story stand out in rich, warm colours under a tone of time.

Unfortunately in the seventeenth century a rather celebrated bishop, Le Goux de la Berchère, conceived the idea of opening a monumental bay in the very middle of the scene in order to connect the church with a chapel situated under the steeple. Thinking of nothing but his objective, he cut his wall through the centre of the decoration, destroying what was most precious, the scene of the Judgment itself, and forty years later, in 1736, when the new organ was put in place, what remained of the central portion was sacrificed to its installation. Only the two extremities, which cover the towers are left to-day and, owing to the dust which settles upon the edges of the bricks, the painting is seen with difficulty.

The subject divides into three zones. In the upper to the left the elect sit in rows, and here is an interesting

bit, in which may be recognized the Emperor Charlemagne and Saint-Louis in a group of personages including a bishop, a queen, a dominican, a franciscan, charmingly painted. On the right, as an inscription explains, are the flames of the eternal fire prepared for the condemned by the devil and his angels. In the middle zone the dead advance in all their nudity with books, in which are inscribed their good and bad actions, hanging from their necks. These approach Christ, while others near them rise from their tombs at the call of the last trumpet. The lower zone is consecrated to a recital of the sufferings inflicted for capital sins. It was once thought that this immense page was due to the inspiration of Dante and that it was consequently a product of the fourteenth century; but it has since been proven that it is French in inspiration as well as in execution. Emile Mâle has recently shown how the evolution of the themes of the Last Judgment, of hell, and the capital sins, in the hands of French religious writers, led insensibly to this horrifying vision in the cathedral of Sainte-Cécile. This authority places the decoration in the episcopacy of Louis I of Amboise (1473-1502).

When Louis II of Amboise succeeded his uncle as Bishop of Albi, he dismissed the French painters, as it appears, and as a concession to the taste of the time confided the remainder of the decoration to a group of painters of Bologna. This immense work, which covers the entire surface of the vast cathedral, was accomplished in a short time, as certain dates found upon the walls, together with the signatures of several Italian painters, show. Most of it seems to have been done between the years 1510 and 1516. Much has naturally been retouched, but the vaulting of the chapels is well preserved, and some of the decorations upon it are still splendid in their rich freshness. But the marvel of all is the decoration of the great vaulting of the roof of the nave which, inaccessible and inviolate, has never been tampered with and, with the exception of a few spots where the damp-

ness has affected it, is intact. In its prodigious variety, its foliage, its pictures, its porticoes, its bright gilding, it has been compared with the decorations of Pinturicchio in the Vatican.

One cannot leave Albi without mounting to the great flat roof, to the substantial tower, the latter a legacy from Louis d'Amboise. From this elevation there is a superb view of the surrounding country. The cathedral occupies the centre of a pretty little basin, populous and fertile, and bordered by slopes of a clayey soil. A few steeples, the old tower of Castelnau-de-Lévis, enliven the horizon. At the foot of Sainte-Cécile huddle the mellow tile roofs of many dwellings, while below the Tarn runs its troubled course and takes the warm colour of the soil. The old bridge with its irregular arcades of brick is essentially of the picture, and the charming vestiges of the ancient palace of the bishops make a great oneness with the cathedral.

There is no good stone in Albigeois; only the soft, warm-hued clay of the alluvium of the Tarn has furnished the building materials for the old city. In the north, where bricks are often made of earth that has been blackened by the soot of coal fires, one does not realize that brick may have a beauty comparable to stone. One is ignorant of the warm tones with which it may be clothed when pressed by hand in a hot soil, fired by a wood fire, according to the method of the ancients, and joined carefully by fine lines of mortar which make a sort of network or mesh over the finish and impart lightness and variety to large, uniform planes denuded of ornament, rich only by their form and their colour. This material is particularly appropriate for effects of mass such as are supremely the character of Sainte-Cécile.

Albi itself is a charming little city. The fact that it is off the beaten track has left it in full possession of its ancient character. As one approaches it from the railway station, a fine statue of Lapérouse, the navigator,

offers a connecting link with certain gastronomic memories of a restaurant of that name dedicated to this hero, whose history one may read upon the pedestal. Another pleasant connection with æsthetic pleasure is the collection of Toulouse-Lautrec in the old *archevêché*. Toulouse-Lautrec was born at Albi, as was Lapérouse, and thus the city honours its two great men. The collection in the bishop's palace gains point from the fact that it was given by the artist's mother, an old lady of eighty-odd still living in Toulouse, and a Monsieur Joyant, a patron of the painter. There are, amongst a variety of subjects, three portraits of Madame Toulouse-Lautrec, of which one, a tender, beautiful drawing of an old lady playing the piano, so French, so provincial, one could never forget it! How hair has changed! is the sad reflection that comes as one admires these smooth coiffures, the elegance of the so-called 'French twist' of the 'eighties.

As for hotels, there are several, and one in a narrow street, with a charming garden, blazoned proudly with the device of approval pinned upon it by the Touring Club of France. I stayed in Albi long enough to dine in them all, but did not regret my own choice, which was the Hôtel Vigan, a quaint and ancient hostelry, with large comfortable rooms, Gothic sanitary arrangements, and agreeable servants. The meals were abundant and the cooking excellent, and so the dining-room attracts most of the floating population of Albi, largely composed of commercial travellers. I had an amusing encounter with one of these, a handsome meridional type, whom I could not help observing had noticed me favourably as he faced me across the long dinner table. My own behaviour, I may protest, was irreproachable, as always, but on the second or third day as I was leaving my room, which was situated at a sort of cross-roads in the vast complexity of corridors upstairs, I encountered this fellow just at the moment when I had paused, as I always found it necessary to do, before recognizing my route. He seized the opportunity: '*Vous cherchez*



*quelquechose, Madame?* ' he insinuated with eagerness. 'Merely the way out', I replied briefly, then to soften the implied reproof, 'It makes so dark here.' The answer came quickly in a seductive whisper: '*C'est bon pour s'embrasser, Madame.*'

## CHAPTER XIV

### CAHORS AND PÉRIGUEUX

**I** LIKE churches which sit upon the market-place. Saint-Etienne of Cahors does so in a most affable manner and democratic spirit, making a great oneness with the people and their lettuces and radishes, screaming their produce under white tents on market days, which are days of battle in Cahors. When I first saw it there was a fair going on as well as the market and the whole town was in a meridional uproar. I had followed a straggling file of travellers from the train into the centre of the vortex and settled in at the Hôtel de France, which was one great bouquet of flowering window-boxes: lusty geraniums were bobbing and blowing about in a great summer wind and a dazzling sun. The hotel was high-ceiled and spacious. I got me a room on the street, all painted in violet madder, and sticking my head out between the pink blossoms, enjoyed the spectacle below. Little carts, loaded with every conceivable commodity, were being rattled over the paving-stones by galloping nags, whipped up by cheerful peasants in their Sunday best, conversing at high pitch in their native Quercy dialect, their faces red with health and wind and wine, and shiny with heat and sunburn and unwonted scrubbing.

After the silence of serene Albi, the noise and bustle of Cahors was prodigious. The fair had attracted all the country-side, that had not already come to market, and those who were not driving violently back and forth were promenading vigorously up and down under my windows, chattering volubly, or grouped listening unconvinced to fakirs with strong lungs who harangued from soap-

boxes in an effort to prevail over the hard-headed Cahorsins in the matter of patent medicines or kitchen novelties, while a vast amount of sticky nougat and sweet-drops were hawked about on barrows with flat tops, exposed to the covetous eyes of children and to the dust and flies and the scorching sun.

Far down the street, in front of the old University buildings and the Hôtel de Ville, the statue of Gambetta, by Falguière, wearing a fur-lined overcoat but no hat and resting one hand upon a cannon while pointing with the other towards that 'dark horizon where the fire of the last charge burns red', held his own and even commanded respect on this day of days. For was not Gambetta, too, a Cahorsin? Falguière makes him short, stocky of figure, with a big head, while the little verse of the pedestal explains:

Tête haute et le geste large  
Le Tribun Héros montre du doigt  
Le sombre Horizon où rougoie  
Le Feu de la dernière charge  
Le canon dort à son côté  
Héros devant l'Eternité  
Tête haute et le geste large  
Il évoque la folle Charge. . . .

All the routes that lead to Cahors are picturesque: by Libos, by Brive, by Montauban, or by Capdenac. I came by Montauban on the first day of June. It was a fascinating country through mellow wheat-fields billowing in a high wind. The capital of the Lot, seventy-one miles north of Toulouse, between that city and Limoges, Cahors has a lovely situation, nestling between hills in a basin of the river upon a rocky peninsula where the Lot makes a loop in its tortuous winding. There is a sound of rushing water, due to mill-dams and to the waters of the *Fontaine des Chartreux*. Cahors communicates with the opposite shore by three bridges, and one of these, the Pont Valentré, to the west of the town, is the finest fortified bridge of the Middle Ages in France. It is early

fourteenth century, each end is defended by high machicolated towers, and another tower, less elaborate, surmounts the central pier.

Before the Roman conquest Cahors, which grew up near the sacred fountain of the Chartreux, the fountain of Divona, as it was called, was the capital of the Cadurci, and under the Romans it enjoyed great prosperity, partly due to its manufactures of cloth and mattresses, which were exported even to Rome. In the Middle Ages it was the capital of the ancient province of Quercy and its territory, until after the Albigensian Crusade, was a fief of the counts of Toulouse. The seigniorial rights belonged to the bishops, who were also empowered to coin money. In the thirteenth century it was an important financial centre owing to its colony of Lombardy bankers and the name, Cahorsin, was then synonymous with 'banker', or 'usurer'.

Down by the statue of Gambetta are the buildings of the University, founded in 1331, by Pope John XXII, who was a native of Cahors. Fénelon was one of its illustrious students, and Jacques Cujas, the celebrated jurisconsult, was one of its teachers. In 1751 the University was united to its rival, the University of Toulouse. Cahors has always been warlike and unmanageable. Its constant opposition to the authority of the bishops drove them, in 1316, to come to an agreement with the French king by which the administration of the town was placed almost wholly in the hands of royal officers, the king and the bishop being joint seigneurs. During the Hundred Years War Cahors, like the rest of Quercy, resisted English occupation and was relieved from it in 1428. In the sixteenth century it belonged to the viscounts of Béarn. It remained Catholic and rose against Henri of Navarre, who took it by assault in 1580. On his accession to the throne of France he punished Cahors by depriving it of its privileges as a wine market, and the loss of these was the chief cause of its decline.

Saint-Etienne lies in the heart of the old town. One

may catch a glimpse of its curious façade from the windows of the Hôtel de France through a narrow street which leads down to the market-place. The portail, Roman with Gothic modifications, is so flat that it gives an immense sensation of solidity and strength. It was built in 1119, but entirely reconstructed in 1285. It stands, like Notre-Dame of Paris, flush with the pavement and at the top of a small declivity, for all the ground behind it slopes down towards the river. The severity of the western front, which is massive and solid, like a tower, is relieved by a slightly recessed doorway, a rose window, six small lancet windows, and by some arches in very short towers with pointed roofs which make the top. This face shows clearly the Gothic changes in a building originally Roman: it is odd and interesting enough, but pass around to the north side where the beauties and originalities of the edifice are all apparent.

What we see is a very curious pile in white-grey stone with two heavy, Byzantine domes, or cupolas, like twin breasts, between the apse and the front. From all sides, as well as from the beautiful cloisters of this church, the cupolas form a strange architectural feature, constituting indeed the most astonishing specimen of this device built at the time when it was in vogue, that is to say in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The cupolas of Saint-Etienne are remarkable for their age, their boldness, and their vast proportions and are the largest of all those built in the Middle Ages, exceeding even those of Saint-Mark's in Venice. Odd and clumsy as they appear from the outside, their effect is more extraordinary within, so let us leave them for a moment while we look at the beautiful sculpture of the north doorway, the most impressive thing about the cathedral of Cahors.

The ground, as has been said, slopes down hill, so that this door, on the north side, which has been blocked up solid, appears to have been engulfed by the rising level of the street and stands in a sort of area protected by an iron railing. Around this doorway is an architec-

tural frame, much restored in 1911, but exceedingly quaint and charming. There are round, slim columns connected by small, round arches, and the space between the columns is studded with flower forms. This corresponds to the decoration of the embrasure of the door itself.

The tympanum of this door, which is the thing to dwell upon, ranks as one of the most important fragments of monumental French sculpture. A cast of it is preserved in the museum of comparative sculpture at the Trocadéro. In the centre of the tympanum, which like the cupolas is Byzantine in inspiration, is the figure of Christ in a lozenge-shaped device, surrounded by seven angels in extravagant attitudes of adoration. The place of an eighth angel is vacant. The meaning of this composition has been much disputed: it is generally understood to be an Ascension, but is more correctly interpreted as the Triumph of Agnus Dei. Jesus figures as the apocalyptic Lamb, following the description in the Book of Revelation. The artist has translated this symbolic idea by representing Jesus, not ascending into heaven, but in heaven. His hand is raised in the gesture of salutation rather than benediction, and the whole body is surrounded by the nimbus. The little figures in canopied panels underneath and along the sides are quaintly expressive and piously significant.

The entrance to the cathedral on the west front is through the double door and down a few steps into the narthex, a sort of platform or ante-nave found in early Christian churches and reserved for women, penitents, and converts under instruction before baptism. A beautiful and unusual feature, it exists in the abbey church of Saint-Denis and notably in the churches of Poitiers. At Cahors the narthex is high above the nave, into which one descends by a flight of twelve steps. This is due to the declivity on which the church is built, but in any case it is fortunate, for it forms a magnificent pause before a most curious and bizarre interior. From the narthex we look down into the vast nave, white like a mosque

of extraordinary width, without aisles or columns, and capped by its two enormous domes.

Amongst the big domed churches of Aquitania, Saint-Etienne of Cahors is the oldest, the simplest, and the most beautiful. The width of the nave represents the most powerful effort made by Roman architecture in the Occident to vault vast spaces. The effect is oriental to a degree and once inside the cathedral one seems to have been transported to one of the great eastern churches, so different is the arrangement from what is usually seen.

The Treasure of Saint-Etienne was pillaged in 1793, and it was at this time that the church lost its most celebrated relic, the *Saint-Suaire*, which was said to have been the shroud in which our Saviour was wrapped at the time of burial. According to an old tradition this relic was sent by the Emperor of Constantinople to Charlemagne, who himself gave it to Cahors. No text verifies this tradition, and the shroud may have been one of the gifts to Saint-Etienne by Jean XXII. The '*Sainte Coiffe*', as the people called it, was shown every year at the Pentecost for three days, during which time it attracted great crowds of pilgrims and the poor were given alms.

Such is the history of Saint-Etienne of Cahors. When I last saw it a priest and a few canons were dolefully chanting the morning 'office' to an empty church. The great, square interior was disorderly, if not rather dirty, because, as it struck me, people obliged to live in one room cannot be neat. An overworked sacristan was trying to lay straight a long strip of carpet from the entrance, down the steps, to an altar where a ceremony, perhaps a wedding, was in preparation. The whitewashed interior of the nave contrasted oddly with the colourful choir, overlaid with brilliant, restored, decorations. Without, in the old cloisters, an exquisitely twisted pepper tree was casting its shade over a romantic corner, one of the most beautiful, after Arles, that I have found in my wanderings.

With all its character and charm, this extraordinary

monument remains almost unknown, which is the height of injustice, surely, for not only has it such positive attractions in itself, it lies in the midst of some of the most picturesque natural scenery of southern France. The reputation of the cathedral suffers chiefly on account of the proximity of the more famous, more pretentious, church of Saint-Front, of Périgueux, which Felix de Verneilh made the centre of a study of the question of the origins of the Byzantine element in French architecture.

### SAINT-FRONT OF PÉRIGUEUX

Between Marseille and Chalon-sur-Soane, the valleys of the Rhône and the Soane have preserved a great number of antique churches almost intact and in this locality, more than elsewhere, Roman traditions left their traces up to the twelfth century. At the end of this century comes a change and the buildings on the banks of the Rhône suggest the architecture of earlier times and Byzantine elements appear, introduced into general architecture as well as into the ornamentation of churches. We find polygonal apses, polygonal cupolas, supported by a series of buttressed arches, flat arcades laid against walls, mouldings applied flat to flat façades, divided by many members, scattered ornaments often presenting combinations quite foreign to the local flora, and sharp indented foliage all revealing their oriental origin. This is explained by the frequent relations between the cities of the littoral with the Orient which existed during the course of the twelfth century.

As one ascends the valley of the Rhône, this foreign influence wears off, or at least it takes on a different character as it mixes with the eastern influences that penetrate France from the Rhine. There is a difference for this reason: on the borders of the Mediterranean, in the twelfth century, the people had direct and constant relations with the Orient coming under the influence of its contemporary Art, whereas the Byzantine arts



which left their trace on the banks of the Rhine date from the epoch of Charlemagne.<sup>1</sup>

In 984 a great abbey church was built at Périgueux in imitation of Saint-Mark's of Venice, which had been begun a few years earlier. This was Saint-Front. It reproduced exactly in its plan and arrangements the Venetian model and, a complete alien importation, nothing like it had previously been seen on western soil, nothing so out of character since the invasion of the Barbarians. How it came to be built in this south-western town of France, remote from its source, is a question that has greatly intrigued archæologists, who from long study of it in all its details have decided that it was done under the direction of a French architect who had studied Saint-Mark's or from the design of a Venetian architect, carried out by Gallo-Roman workmen. In other words the architecture is Venetian, but the execution is French, of the period of Roman decadence.

People in the tenth century were very much like people of to-day. Here was a great novelty in church building, founded on a type that was beginning to be the talk of the civilized world. Everybody wanted it. Despite its foreignness to the epoch and its complete dissimilarity to the churches which had preceded it in this part of Gaul, or probably because of this, it exerted an enormous influence over the architecture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the north of the Garonne.

Nor is its presence in this locality altogether strange. In these days the passage of the Strait of Gibraltar presented the greatest risks on account of numerous Arab pirates who held the coasts of Spain and Africa, and consequently all the commerce of the Levant with the north coast of France and England, instead of risking the passage of the Strait, went via Marseille or Narbonne, taking the land route thence via Limoges, and re-embarking at Rochelle or Nantes. These Levantine merchants in their passage across this corner of France left colonists at

<sup>1</sup> Viollet-le-Duc.

Limoges and on the west coast, and imported into the centre and west of France, together with their wares, the principles of Byzantine Art.

Périgueux is built like an amphitheatre on the side of a hill, bathed by the waters of the river Isle. It divides into two parts, the ancient *cité* and *le Puy-Saint-Front*, which formed two distinct cities until the year 1240. The old abbey of Saint-Front was the centre of 'modern' Périgueux, while Saint-Etienne, in the ancient *cité*, was the cathedral. In 1699 the monastery was destroyed and the seat of the bishop was transferred to the abbatial church.

Saint-Front, one of the most curious basilicas in France, may be taken as the type, the mother of all the monuments with the dome in France. Its enormous mass, which, from the top of the *puy*, dominates the entire town, first strikes us by its strangeness. Its plan is in the form of the Greek Cross, preceded by a narthex. There are five cupolas, one in the centre and one over each arm of the cross. These measure nearly forty feet in diameter and eighty-two feet at their greatest height, while the branches of the cross measure nearly two hundred feet each. The cupolas are all alike, differing slightly from those of Saint-Mark's, which are perfectly spherical, by being pointed at the apex. A still more conical dome surmounts the steeple. This tower contains a carillon of twenty-one bells, and the church, one of the largest in France, can hold seventeen thousand persons standing.

A number of churches with cupolas were built in Aquitania in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Besides Cahors and Périgueux, the churches of Souillac, Angoulême, Trémolac, Saint-Emilion, Saint-Hilaire of Poitiers, Fontevrault, and Puy-en-Vélay possess domes.

## CHAPTER XV

### CARCASSONNE

THE visitor to Carcassonne will have many pre-occupations besides its cathedral. I made the trip there from Narbonne, from which I had, alas, expected too much. It was therefore with an imagination wholesomely chastened that I followed the route inland that cuts across a charming country to Carcassonne. Some few minutes before drawing into the station which goes by this name, we passed, far away and high upon its plateau, the object of the quest, the ancient *Cité*, and then steamed into the modern town which lies along the Canal du Midi. It is curious how little of what one reads about foreign places sinks into a resisting consciousness. I had preconceived notions of Carcassonne, which I had long dreamed of knowing, and in spite of all that I had heard and read and seen, in the way of photographs and travel posters, had formed my own picture of one antique city with bulging bastions, built within a more modern one, equally fortified, as the kernel encloses the nut. I had thought of Carcassonne in the terms of the Château of Chambord, constructed somehow after that impregnable design. What I found was two entirely distinct and separate towns, the first a mere preface, a stepping-stone, or, as Henry James puts it, a 'humble doormat' to the other.

If you see nothing of the *Cité* from the station, you see quite enough during those moments of approach to whet the appetite. The ancient, the real Carcassonne, is all, from so great a distance, that imagination had conceived. Old and brown, with a multitude of ramparts, towers, battlements, barbicans, it is quite the fairy city, perfectly

illustrating the setting of those thrilling stories of brave knights, distressed damsels, cruel kings, intriguing witches, orgres, dragons, and all the rest of it, upon which youth used to feed in the innocence of bygone days. Of a piece with its solid pedestal, its medieval silhouette is perfectly detached against the sky and it repeats, in a more magnificent and complete manner, the impression of those extraordinary towns of the Alpes-Maritimes—Eze, Saint-Paul, Lantosque—in which the rock itself upon which they are founded seems to have developed architectural forms, to have shaped itself into dwellings as man required them.

Fate guided my footsteps across the Canal du Midi and into the Hôtel Bristol immediately opposite, which turned out to be one of the most comfortable hotels of southern Europe. Its white façade extends along the canal, there is a charming dining-room and excellent service, administered by domestics who seem one and all to hail from Barcelona—the Spanish influence is potent at Carcassonne. A romantic traveller might well think it the thing to stop in the old town, where, indeed, there is a pretentious hostelry with fantastic prices and all the glitter of reconstituted antiquity. This hotel installed itself before the entire *Cité* became a *monument historique*. No other may now invade the sacred precincts, and this monopoly has the inevitable results upon which I shall not dwell, for indeed there is much in Carcassonne to which the eyes must be closed, restoration being the great mark of the *Cité*.

The Bristol has all the comforts and none of the pretentiousness, and if it is far from the shrine it is a stone's throw from the station, which has its solid advantages. When I arrived the beautiful May afternoon was drawing to a close, but as there were still some good hours of daylight before me, I threw my bags into my room and set forth at once for the ancient *Cité*. It was a long walk, or a fairly long one, through the whole of the lower town, the 'humble doormat'. Not that it presents itself as humble and, inasmuch as its population exceeds that of its ancestor by about twenty times, it probably does not feel that it suffers by

comparison. As a matter of fact, however, the *ville-basse* is only relatively new. It resembles any other modern French city, having in common with such straight streets cut at right angles, squares which look upon houses without style or taste made from a uniform model ; but in spite of these drawbacks to æstheticism, it is gay, animated, prosperous, well-watered, and surrounded in its plain by plenty of green. Such as it is one takes it in at a glance while speeding from it.

The way lies along the Rue de la Gare to the Grand' Rue, turning left as far as the Square Gambetta, turning right by the Boulevard du Musée to the Rue du Vieux Pont, and following that street on the left to the little high-backed bridge from which it takes its name. The Vieux Pont crosses the river Aude, the dividing line between the two cities, and lands us in a vague little rustic faubourg grouped about the church of Saint-Gimer, indescribably poverty-stricken and characterless, the real doormat, and one very worn and dusty. I managed to lose myself in trying to scale the steep slopes of the plateau by what seemed to be a path and over which children were clambering like goats, but as it led nowhere I had to come down and begin all over again at the church, whence a ramp, called the *Montée de la Porte de l'Aude*, carried me by a stiff climb to the chief gate of the *Cité*.

If the *Montée* was steep, there were plenty of benches and such views of increasing loveliness as gave every excuse for loitering along its path. The Porte de l'Aude looks towards Toulouse. There is a second—the Porte Narbonnaise—a magnificent gate supported by strong, high towers and defended by elaborate outworks ; and these two are the only entrances to the town, aside from a small sallyport, protected by a huge bastion, on the side that looks towards the Pyrenees. A grassy path follows the outer wall, where the old moat has been filled in, forming a broad, level piece of sward from which is to be enjoyed a full view of the mountains, glorious at any time but especially so in the early evening when they are enveloped in a marvellous

violet glow. The *Carcassonnais* are well aware of the advantages of this promenade and one finds them stretched at length reposing after the heat of the day, contemplating their extensive view.

The old city on the heights offers little rest in itself, as its streets are tortuous and steep and roughly paved. If there was anything more surprising than another in its melancholy it was the extreme simplicity of its inhabitants. Of what was formerly rather a thriving place only about a thousand people have maintained a residence in a town that has been pretty generally given over to sightseers, and these seemed to be of the poorest. One found them seated in groups on benches outside their wretched hovels, not consciously picturesque, as might be expected, but as it were making a stand against total annihilation. There was a remarkable restaurant in which I lunched, in company with four other tourists, because of its undeniable air of authenticity. An old woman and her son kept the place going, and as an order was given to the son the mother ran and fetched the materials from some unseen source. Patrons were evidently so rare that nothing was kept on hand. A little primitive café, with a vine-covered porch and a dark interior, supplemented the restaurant and was evidently kept alive by strictly local patronage. It was by sticking to these and avoiding the meretricious inn that one kept in tune with Carcassonne.<sup>1</sup>

The antique city with its two concentric walls, both guarded by numerous towers and by a complicated system of defences, appears, in spite of much restoration, to be a living example of feudal times. One of the chief curiosities of France, its origin is almost unknown. We say that it dates from the Roman occupation of Gaul, but at the time of the Roman Conquest it was already the stronghold of the Atacini, and commanded one of the great roads into Spain. From Roman domination it passed to that of the

<sup>1</sup> Auter's restaurant on the Rue Courtejaire in the lower town is famous for its cooking, but I cannot recommend it from experience as I did not go there.

Visigoths, who fortified it. Theodoric was their King, and it was during his time that the inner *enceinte* was raised upon the ruins of the Roman fortifications. Most of the Visigoth towers that are still erect are seated upon Roman substructions which give evidence of having been formed in haste, probably at the time of the Frankish invasion. The builders of these solid defences, though occasionally disturbed, held Carcassonne and the neighbouring country until the year 713, when they were expelled by the Moors of Spain, who occupied the city for four centuries and departed, leaving no trace of their passage.

The history of Carcassonne becomes more interesting from the year 1209 when, during the crusade against the Albigeois, the army of Simon de Montfort, after having cut the throats of the population of Béziers, laid siege to Carcassonne. The inhabitants, after performing prodigious feats of valour, were obliged to capitulate for lack of water, the heat having dried up the wells. In 1262 the people revolted against the king and were cruelly punished by being chased out of the city. Later they obtained permission to build at some distance from the bridge, and this was the origin of the *ville-basse*. This cursory résumé is gleaned from a pamphlet by Viollet-le-Duc, which may be bought from the custodian of the citadel, and which is a document to be read on the fortifications themselves by such visitors who are interested in medieval history. The author gives a long and minute account of the memorable sieges of Simon de Montfort and of Raymond de Trincavel, and describes how Saint-Louis and Philippe le Hardi, in the thirteenth century, multiplied the defences of Carcassonne, which was one of the bulwarks of their kingdom on the Spanish frontier.

The cathedral lies close to the fortifications and near to the amphitheatre. It is dedicated to Saint-Nazaire and Saint-Celse. Though not much to look at from the outside, it reveals splendours within, for its ornamentation is prodigious and its immense windows are of the greatest magnificence. The church is curious as an example of northern

Gothic invading a Roman monument of the south. It is of two sharply distinct epochs, as clearly unrelated and different as are the two parts of the Temple Church in London, but gracefully brought together by what Monsieur Joseph Poux, the author of a monograph on Carcassonne, calls a *mariage d'inclination*—a love match. The nave and its two aisles belong to a Roman church of the eleventh century. The choir and transepts were built in the purely ogival style in the beginning of the fourteenth century by Pierre de Roquefort.

This prelate, who was Bishop from 1300 to 1320, aspired to make Saint-Nazaire, so modest in extent, a masterpiece of elegance and richness. Contrary to what we see at Narbonne, where ornament is entirely lacking, sculpture and glass were lavished at Saint-Nazaire. Twenty-two admirable statues representing Christ, the Virgin, the twelve apostles, the patron saints, and four other saints surround the choir and apse. The left-hand chapel contains the Bishop's tomb, with his portrait statue standing in a canopied triptych between figures of the archdeacon and minor archdeacon. He is richly dressed and wears all the ecclesiastical accoutrements of his rank. The base of the monument, divided into three bays, is embellished with an arcade, in the thirteen divisions of which stand a series of clerks and canons in low relief.

A still more interesting feature of the cathedral is the chapel on the right-hand side of the choir and on a lower level. It is isolated from the body of the church, and for this reason has been popularly known as the lepers' chapel, a tradition to which now little credence is given. It contains the tomb of an earlier Bishop, Guillaume Radulph, who held the see from 1255 to 1266, the date of his death, as recorded on the tomb. Although the relief of the Bishop himself is mediocre the tomb is a fine one, the sarcophagus being embellished with a series of small figures perfectly preserved, representing the canons of the cathedral in their choir garb. The remarkable preservation of this frieze is accounted for by the fact that for several centuries, during



which the level of the floor of the chapel had been raised to that of the cathedral by filling in, it was covered with earth and thus protected from mutilation.

One of the great curiosities of the cathedral is a bas-relief in sandstone fixed to the western wall of the Rodier Chapel, also on the southern side. It represents the attack of a fortified place in which the besiegers try to force the lists of a town surrounded by walls and the besieged work a mangonel. This relief has been interpreted as depicting the death of Simon de Montfort, who was killed before the walls of Toulouse by the stone of a machine operated by women on the Place de Saint-Sernin. Viollet-le-Duc thought that the stone might date from the time of that siege, and that the soul being carried into the skies by angels might well be that of Simon de Montfort.

The windows form the great beauty of Saint-Nazaire. There are seven long ones in the choir besides the rose windows of the transept. They are of the Toulouse school of stained glass and differ accordingly from the glass of Chartres, Bourges, Paris, etc. Three of the choir windows are of the epoch of the building, and the middle one, back of the altar, almost unrestored, in blue glass varied with gorgeous red, is more magnificent than anything to be seen in the Sainte-Chapelle. The windows to the right and left of the chancel represent the Tree of Jesse and the Tree of Life. The latter is very interesting, having been made apparently to illustrate the *Lignum Vitæ* by Saint-Bonaventure. On the Tree of Life, which, as mentioned in the Book of Revelation, God planted in Eden to provide our first parents with the fruits of immortality, Saint-Bonaventure grafts the great principle of life, the tree from which the Cross was made. From its text, that unrolls itself from one banderole to the other, in leonine verse, springs a lesson of exemplary virtues inscribed on the panels, each virtue being linked to the verse that matures it as the fruit hangs from the bough that feeds it. The twelve salutary virtues thus illustrate the forty-eight chapters on meditation with which the circumstances of the birth of Jesus, His

Passion, and His glorification inspired in Bonaventure. To each of the fruits a prophetic phylactery, held by a personage of the Old Testament, corresponds. The top of the window is filled with the verse in which Saint-Bonaventure urges Christian souls to pray to God for the grace of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, the sublime fruits of the Tree of Life.

The window, which is probably unique in the world, has been badly restored by Gérente, under Viollet-le-Duc, and some of its mystical meaning destroyed. In the miniatures which illustrate the saint's book the tree sends its roots into the four rivers of Paradise. This no doubt was the original conception of the window, but Gérente, in restoring it, added the story of the first sin to the lower part of the composition, thus altering the nature of the symbol. The famous fresco of Santa-Croce, in Florence, and the remarkable miniatures of Berlin and Darmstadt illustrate this subject, and those fortunate enough to have seen them may make their own comparisons.

This window is only one of many instances in which the restoration of Carcassonne went too far. The subject is a sore one with archæologists, and Viollet-le-Duc, who worked his will upon the city, put it in perfect order and revived the fortifications in every detail, has been accused of replacing the crumbling monument by a personal edition revised, corrected, and considerably augmented, and it is even said that he and his school, which might have done useful work with less presumption and more science, were *néfastes* to Carcassonne.<sup>1</sup>

Rodin has a word to say on the subject of restoration so pertinent that I feel tempted to give it in the original

*'Toutes les restaurations sont des copies, c'est pourquoi elles sont d'avance condamnées, car il ne faut copier—laissez-moi le répéter!—avec la passion de la fidélité, que la nature la copie des œuvres d'art est interdite par le principe même de l'art.*

*'Et les restaurations—sur ce point aussi je veux insister*

<sup>1</sup> P. François de Neufchâteau.

*encore—sont toujours molles et dures en même temps ; vous les reconnaîtrez à ce signe. C'est que la science ne suffit pas à produire la beauté ; il faut la conscience.*

*' En outre, les restaurations entraînent la confusion, parce qu'elles introduisent l'anarchie dans les effets. Les vrais effets se dérobent au procédé ; pour les obtenir, il faut beaucoup d'expérience, un grand recul, la science des siècles. . . .<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Les Cathédrales de France.

## CHAPTER XVI

### COUTANCES

WE approached Coutances from Avranches, after a rainy morning in that charming hill town which overlooks the Bay of Saint-Michel, and, seeing the cathedral standing like a grim, grey sentinel upon its granite hill, high above the railroad, we disregarded such mediocre comfort as an hotel which finds itself in the valley offered our weariness and our wetness in our eagerness to climb to the top, by a most bewitching, shaded driveway, and to settle ourselves up there in the atmosphere of the cathedral and the ancient monuments. I mention this as it was very bad politics, and had we been less hardy travellers we might bitterly have regretted it.

The sad truth is that Coutances is so completely off the beaten track that there are no hotels upon the heights, and we had to content ourselves with the most makeshift of arrangements for the night. The peculiarity of our lodgings, however, was more than made up for by a chance which threw us into the hands of a most obliging restaurateur who took care of us and fed us to our order in a clean little place, called the Café des Tribunaux, at the corner of the Rue Saint-Nicolas and the Rue de Tourville. Madame E. Branche, as she was called, advertised home cooking and 'repasts at all hours', and was as good as her word. We ordered our dinner, our breakfast, our luncheon, and when we came in at the appointed hours found all these meals immaculately served and exceedingly palatable. She promised us upon our next visit to provide us with chambers, and I fear thought we might be the forerunners of such a horde of our compatriots as might make her fortune. We

appeared to be the only visitors at Coutances, which gave us, perhaps, a certain prestige, at any rate wherever we went, and we went naturally everywhere, we were treated with a courtesy which, alas ! since the War, has come to be called ' old-fashioned '.

As for going everywhere, there are many redoubtable sights at Coutances besides the supreme object of our pilgrimage. There are numerous medieval monuments, amongst which the churches of Saint-Pierre and Saint-Nicolas stand out prominently along the main street ; there are many ancient houses and above all the ruins of a thirteenth-century viaduct. An exquisite public or botanical garden forms a great attraction to the place and a very unusual one in so small a town, and there are fine and extensive views of the sweep of country commanded from various points of vantage along the boulevards of Coutances and the site of the ancient ramparts.

Coutances is in the centre of that piece of Normandy which forms a peninsula at its north-west extremity and which is known as the Cotentin, a name derived from its early Roman appellation, *pagus Constantius*. Coutances owes its own name to the Emperor Constantius Chlorus, who enlarged and fortified it, in 296. It became the capital of the *pagus Constantius*, and is still the chief city of its *arrondissement*. Saint-Ereptiole came to Coutances in 430 to preach Christianity and from that year it was the seat of a bishop.

Its situation on the right bank of the river Soulle, on a rocky eminence of considerable height, was very favourable to the erection of a cathedral and a church of sorts was speedily built over the foundations of a pagan temple on the apex of the hill. Several of the early bishops of Coutances were venerated as saints and one of them, Saint-Lô, gave his name to the capital city of the Manche. Of the churches which preceded the present cathedral nothing is known until we come to the Roman monument which immediately antedated it. Coutances had meanwhile fallen into the hands of the Normans, and it was not until

about the year 1030 that its Bishop, Robert, could return and begin the rebuilding of the cathedral, with the powerful aid of Gonnor, the widow of Richard I. He was not destined to finish it, however, for he died in 1048, and it was his successor, Geoffroy de Montbray, one of the greatest pontiffs of Coutances, who completed the work. By 1057 the nave was finished and it was consecrated amidst a superb fête. When Geoffroy de Montbray lacked funds he betook himself to Calabria, where Tancred de Hauteville reigned, and thanks to his generosity and to that of Robert Guiscard he was able to erect the two towers of the great façade, another at the transept, and even to commence the choir. A companion of William in the conquest of England he was able to obtain further subsidies and before he died, in the year 1093, he could raise himself up in his bed and contemplate with joy and satisfaction the gold cock which, in accordance with the Norman tradition, surmounted the central tower.

Coutances passed through many vicissitudes before settling down to its present imperturbable calm in which the ecclesiastical records have disappeared, so there is no means of knowing by what process this Roman cathedral, which of itself must have been a magnificent building, gave way to the perfect Norman structure, and no document exists which can fix with precision the date of the change. History is so silent upon the subject that it was not until Gothic cathedrals came again into general notice, about a hundred years ago or less, that it was even suspected that the present cathedral was other than that building erected by these bishops in the eleventh century.

But the stones themselves are eloquent and tell a convincing story of the transition of this church from magnificent Roman to purest Gothic. Under the Gothic robe which covers it, under the elegance of its colonettes and the spring of its towers is hidden the Roman foundation robustly planted. Viollet-le-Duc confirms the story of its transformation: 'Whether it threatened ruin, or whether it was not large enough, or whether the diocese of Coutances, newly united to the crown of France, wanted to take part

in the great movement which caused the rebuilding of all the cathedrals north of the Loire, the cathedral of Coutances was entirely reconstructed.'

Coutances is the best possible introduction to Norman churches as it is so perfect a specimen and so perfectly preserved. A wide parvis extends before it, and from its farther end one can best enjoy the simple, harmonious façade, so different from the façades of the Ile-de-France, with its two acutely pointed spires forming one of the unique features of its design. It was Henry Adams who said: 'What the Normans began they completed. Not one of the great French cathedrals has two stone spires complete of the same age, while each of the little towns of Coutances, Bayeux, and Caen contains its twin towers and flèches of stone as solid and perfect now as they were seven hundred years ago.' Even Chartres, though it managed to erect its two spires, did not succeed in making them of the same epoch, as here, and it is just this regularity, to which we are unaccustomed, that makes the façade of Coutances, to one who sees it for the first time, seem a little dry, a little plain and severe.

This impression, I assure you, wears off with contemplation. Such gigantic monuments cannot be appreciated in a moment, and it is a thousand times more profitable to the soul to come to Coutances as we did by the little limping train, stopping at all the pretty stations, and to be lodged ridiculously, if you like, upon the summit, with infinite leisure to study the cathedral, than to dash up in a motor-car with only a moment to spare before setting forth to meet an appointment to eat lobsters at Saint-Malo.

The two towers of the façade are something that we shall not see again, they stand apart amongst the innumerable towers of the Gothic epoch; while the two stone flèches do not spring from the sort of base usual in other churches, their place of joining more or less disguised; they settle in towards the centre and are flanked by a group of smaller spires, the long, vertical lines of which carry out the design of the bases. These fine, long lines going directly to the

ground with the long line of windows one over the other, on the right-hand side, taken together with the clusters of pointed pinnacles before the rise of the final arrow, sharper than any other flèche in Europe, make one of the great beauties and refinements of a supremely majestic portail. The spires fling their finials and their crosses two hundred and fifty-six feet above the ground, but the effect is of a far greater height on account of the repeated upward pointing of every part.

There are no ornaments. The middle door, denuded of its Virgin and sixteen statues of saints which formerly enriched it, is still admirable for its depth and the beauty of its outline. To the right a low door is surmounted by a pretty window in three panels; to the left there is a double lancet window of great elegance. A little ceremony is associated with the left-hand door; it is opened only for the first entry of a new bishop and not again until it gives passage to his coffin. This custom is a souvenir of a miracle performed by Saint-Lô in this place.

While the gallery in a lacework of stone with its three little gables and its five roses is a charming thing in itself one feels it out of place on this façade. It was added by Bishop Sylvestre in the sixteenth century. Even the large window of the nave, so handsome in itself, is scarcely in keeping with this military façade, while the long row of quatrefoils, forming a sort of hemstitched line across the top of the three doors, is another anachronism.

The rear view of the cathedral, from the gardens of the bishop's palace, is almost more impressive than the front. The vast vessel mounts by stages, as at Bourges, supported by its great flying buttresses and presents an ensemble of pointed roofs and sharp turrets which, however, culminate in the supreme glory of the building—its octagonal central tower. This feature, the envy of all other churches, is unique. Coutances alone has preserved its central thirteenth-century tower. 'Neither at Chartres, nor at Paris, nor at Laon, nor at Amiens, nor at Reims, nor at Bourges, will you see a central tower to compare with the enormous





COUTANCES  
THE APSE AND LANTERN



pile at Coutances.'<sup>1</sup> Indeed the architects of France failed to solve this particular problem of church building which was a speciality of Normandy and does not belong to the architecture of the Ile-de-France.

*Le plomb*, as it is called at Coutances, rises from the cross of the transept. Originally the altar occupied the centre of the church and above it, like a precious crown, the architects conceived a lantern of giant proportions. It rises here to the height of one hundred and ninety feet above the floor of the nave. Its eight sides are lighted by two storeys of windows and four turrets enclosing spiral stairways flank its sides and lead to the flat top, crowned by a balustrade in stone quatrefoils. The beauty and purity of its lines dispense with the need for ornament, of which there is but little. Who knows what the architect's plan was? They say it was intended to raise upon this base a *flèche* higher than those of the *façade*. If that be so there is nothing to indicate that it was ever attempted, and who shall regret its absence?

Viollet-le-Duc did indeed lament: 'A *clocher* of that period (about 1200) built over the cross of a cathedral following lines so happy, should be a monument of the greatest beauty; unfortunately we possess not a single one in France. Fire and the hand of man more than time have destroyed them all, and we find on our greatest religious edifices no more than bases for and fragments of these beautiful constructions.'

Inside the cathedral the *plomb* again makes the most remarkable feature of an interior of utmost finish and refinement. It is said that the Maréchal de Vauban, Louis XIV's illustrious officer, when he passed through Coutances, had a carpet spread under the lantern and, lying upon it, remained for hours in contemplation of this *chef-d'œuvre*.

Aside from the magnificence of her lantern Coutances is a modest cathedral which aims at beauty and purity of line and proportion rather than prodigious dimensions or striking features. The interior is tender and harmonious,

<sup>1</sup> Henry Adams, *Mont Saint-Michel and Chartres*.

simple almost to the point of severity, yet of an exquisite lightness, so true and right that nothing stands out in an effort to attract attention. There is no wealth of lace-work in stone, such as Reims once boasted ; no glory of windows, such as Chartres offers ; no breath-taking heights of vaulting, such as Beauvais and Amiens vaunt : yet, upon examination, there are certain individualities which inevitably draw us to them.

This is a cathedral which grows upon one with thoughtful contemplation, as Vauban found. Look at the hemicycle of the choir. Here is one of the great beauties of Coutances. It is composed of twelve columns in pairs, forming a double guard behind the sanctuary. These columns, with their peduncular capitals, sustain, above a row of shapely pointed arches, a gallery enclosed by a slender balustrade and from each capital departs a fine, long, straight column—there are six of them, carrying ribs of vaulting to their point of convergence where they are joined together by a sculptured stud. What other cathedral can show so perfect a harmony, so graceful, so pure, so clean a solution of the problem of unity ? The choir of Le Mans, which resembles that of Coutances more closely than any, lacks the symmetry and elegance of this marvellous ensemble.

Coutances is one of those places in the world which one leaves with a wrenching at the heart. As the train recedes the proud silhouette of the purest Norman cathedral lingers long against the sky, while the town diminishes and the hill itself seems to dwindle by comparison with the ever increasing bulk of the cathedral. Our way took us, again by the tiny railway, to Lessay : Lessay with its extraordinary abbey church, outside our scheme of cathedrals, but on no account to be missed as a great type of early Norman architecture.

## CHAPTER XVII

### 'BAYEUX

**B**AYEUX is so well placed in the centre of the fertile plains of Normandy, on the main route from Paris to Cherbourg, that its cathedral is well visited, not only by hosts of English and American tourists, attracted hither chiefly perhaps, if the truth must be told, by the fame of Queen Mathilde's tapestry, but also by scores of French themselves, who find Bayeux frequently on the line of their business and holiday trips. Within easy motoring distance of Coutances, Caen, Deauville, Trouville, and a number of watering-places along the Baie de la Seine, it naturally suggests itself to excursionists with a few hours to spare for a city of unusual character, for the world-famed tapestry, and for one of the most curious and beautiful cathedrals of France.

It is the latter which announces the town from afar as one steams along in a *rapide* from either direction, its twin steeples pointing high in the air from the eminence on which the great bulk is planted, itself concealed by the trees of a verdant landscape and the houses which cluster at its base. From the railroad station, which is about half a mile out of the town, two roads open towards the city—the right-hand one leads to commercial Bayeux, for in its quiet way Bayeux is a centre of rural industry and exports much butter, while its main street is lined with shops of all kinds; the left-hand road makes for the aristocratic old town, and a very few minutes' walk over level country brings the traveller into touch with the great monument, the handsomest of a multitude of Norman-Gothic churches in this part of France.

The town itself is small and active with a certain picturesqueness in the narrow and congested central part, where a sluggish little river makes its way through confined banks, behind old walls, or under covered conduits, and divides Bayeux into two neighbourhoods, one humble and thrifty and the other thrifty but just a little proud of its antiquity and its embellishments. Bayeux with nothing like the ancient air of Henley-on-Thames, with only one-fifth the population of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is possibly as old as our race and certainly older than the records of our religion.

If proof of its antiquity were wanting, the quaintness of certain features of the *cabinets* of the Hôtel du Luxembourg, which every one agrees is *the* hotel of Bayeux, would bear out the tale. I was strongly recommended by the Bajocasses themselves to put up at this gloomy hostelry in preference to one gayer and more vulgar at the opposite end of the town, and so pass the tip along for what it is worth. There is in Bayeux no embarrassment of choice, for besides the two hotels there is only the Benedictine convent which receives guests, of the right sex, and on condition of a protracted stop. One of the wonderful houses of the main street, a house with exposed timbers and overhanging storeys, furnishes repasts to those to whom an abundance of local colour compensates for other deficiencies. In the course of a number of visits to Bayeux I have slept and eaten everywhere, except at the convent, and apart from unlimited supplies of butter at every meal and cider *à volonté*, I have no memories. The food was neither good nor bad. If I remember the cider, which though a great speciality of Normandy is a beverage that I do not like, it is because of the gusto with which others drank it. My taste for this drink was perhaps vitiated in my childhood by the home brew in my native land.

I do recall with great pleasure, of a perverse and melancholy kind, breakfasting in the garden of the Hôtel du Luxembourg, breakfasting alone in its walled and terraced and damp garden, quite invisible from the street. Cer-

tainly there was style of a kind in this place. It was filled with autumn roses, chrysanthemums, heliotrope, mingling their exquisite or pungent scents, and a small orchard of heavily laden pear trees. There were bosquets with little round iron tables and chairs, painted pale blue, in which I took my coffee, cheered by a most glorious vision of the spires of the cathedral. My room, too, had a similar view, overlooking the garden, and this, together with the deep-toned, emotional bells, sounding the hours and the quarters, did much to atone for the gloom of cold, bare stairways and long, empty, echoing corridors in bad repair, which stood between my cheerful cell and escape into the safety of the street. This hotel, which seemed to have a past, was now kept going by *voyageurs de commerce*: one heard the boots knocking them up in the morning for the early trains, and every evening a fresh lot appeared at the long *table d'hôte*, ate solemnly of the substantial fare, drained off incredible draughts of *cidre du pays*, and disappeared as though they had never been.

My first view of the cathedral was at night, or rather by the last streaks of the departing twilight of a September day. It more than confirmed reports as to its magnificence. Remarkable for its two tall, stern, Norman flèches—twin steeples, sharply pointed, built of stone, surmounting Norman towers of the most massive stateliness—the cathedral in the gathering autumnal dusk filled the eye with a sense of vertiginous height, supported by a prodigality of spreading buttresses. To give the crowning Norman touch, the Gallic cock surmounts both spires. It is a warmer façade than that of Coutances. I faced it squarely at first and caught the full effect of a portail less grim than that of Notre-Dame of that city.

The church is built upon sloping ground, which accident contributes greatly to its dignity and its appearance of upward spring. The approach from the rear, by a fairly steep ascent, brings one upon its most impressive aspect. If the front is good, the back is sublime. From below the impression of slenderness and height, despite the immense

weight of stone, is enhanced, and the flight of the tower of the *chevet*, with its graceful turrets, one of the most beautiful examples of early Gothic in France, dominates an amazing composition. Every possible detail that can be fashioned to point, points upward in this extraordinary mass of which the elaborate tower makes the culmination. We see it from behind, towering above the two front spires, planted astride the sharp roof of the transept, soaring above the round apse whose steep, sloping roof carries the round wall of the clerestory, itself capped by a conical dome of acute sharpness.

One has said that Bayeux lacks the severity of Coutances ; yet Coutances let itself go at this same point, from which departed its magnificent *Plomb* of the thirteenth century, lacking, however, its *flèche*. Bayeux added its central tower a century later over the square formed by the transept crossing the nave. There is a piquancy in the combination of the flamboyant tower cheering the Norman severity, which might have shocked Coutances, which was all for purity of style. But this flamboyant tower, it must be known, had once a stone cupola where now we see a horrid modern dome (placed in 1857), reminding us unpleasantly of a certain great emporium in Montmartre ! One must learn to blind oneself to such atrocious anachronisms.

The old buildings of the episcopal palace, now serving municipal uses, are separated from the north side of the church by a wide courtyard, and this area is completely filled with the spreading branches of a magnificent plane tree, planted in the first year of the Revolution. This tree, completely sheltered from rough winds by its architectural shield, has never been pruned or trimmed and seems never to have lost a twig. Its great branches, gay with singing birds, hang in festoons ; the vast trunk is green and mossy. One of the beautiful trees of the world, it stands as a gorgeous bouquet of foliage in the centre of this happy enclosure, the pride of Bayeux.

One of the great points of the cathedral is the strong design of the western towers. Admire the flamboyant





BAYEUX  
THE CATHEDRAL SCREENED BY THE GREAT TREE



structure as you will, as you must, it will be only to come back in the end to the majestic west façade and, looking at it attentively, the strength of its plan is sure to make itself felt. The towers rise from their foundations with a complete mastery of their ultimate destination, which is the weather-cock on the top of the spires. We have spoken at length, in the chapter on Laon, of the place, the critical place, if you like, where the square tower changes to octagonal with a view to supporting the tapering *flèche*. Here at Bayeux the transition is perhaps even more clever than at Laon, though less exploited. No Villard de Honnecourt has spoken for Bayeux as this thirteenth-century architect spoke for Laon, unless it be Henry Adams, for at Bayeux the designer has not thought of masking his intention, the corner turrets and long intermediate windows effect the change without disguising it. 'One can hardly call it a device', says Adams, 'it is so simple and evident a piece of construction that it does not need to be explained. . . .'

Bayeux presents in architecture an attraction similar to that which Chartres offers in sculpture. One may follow the transformation of the Norman style from the twelfth century to the fifteenth and, by stepping into the crypt, see a well-preserved remnant of the church which the Archbishop of Rouen consecrated in 1078 in the presence of William the Conqueror and the Queen Mathilde, and which Henry I of England burned to ashes in 1106. The Roman cathedral was built by Bishop Odo of Bayeux, who was half-brother of William the Conqueror. This explains the presence in Bayeux of the famous tapestry, in which the Bishop figures as an important personage. It belonged to the cathedral, and before the Revolution it was the custom, dating back probably to its origin, to bring the relic out on great occasions and hang it about the walls of the nave. This solemn and periodic exhibition kept alive the traditions of its history. It is a significant fact that the length of the tapestry corresponds exactly to the length of the walls of Notre-Dame, for which therefore it seems to have been made.

The interior of the cathedral is remarkable for its large, light nave, half Roman with Gothic vaulting, its elegant choir, and above all for a series of ancient sculptures of the greatest interest to the student of Norman Art. The romanesque arcades of the nave belonged to a twelfth-century church, the successor to the one burned by Henry of England. The spandrels are covered with a rich diapering and between each a figure or a little group in relief attracts an amused attention. Some are very quaint, such as this little nude man standing upon a strange socket, clutching his divided beard in his two hands. Adam and Eve stand in a circular panel under a fig-tree which they have just despoiled to cover their nakedness. Eve still holds the fatal apple in one hand, while clasping a leaf to her form, while Adam with similar precaution clutches his throat with his free hand, where the apple seems to choke him. We see Adam, presumably, in the companion panel, being dealt with by a harsh personage with wings and a crossed nimbus.

Each romanesque arch differs from the other: they are most handsome. Fantastic animals, chimera of all sorts, boldly sculptured, give life and variety to the interior, and one notable arch is ornamented with sixty-two heads ranged along its edge, whereas the rest of the arches are embellished with geometric forms of Byzantine origin. Little scenes, such as 'Harold's Oath' and the 'Dedication of the Cathedral', give verisimilitude to Bayeux's history and enrich and enliven the surfaces of the interior.

The different levels upon which the church is built contribute to its interest. The nave is six steps below the entrance porch, the choir is two steps above the nave, the transept is one grade above the nave and one below the choir. From the lateral aisles of the nave there is a descent of six steps to the ambulatory, so that to cross the nave at this point one must go up and then down again before the entrance to the choir. The choir and apse, which date from 1221, may be considered as the model of thirteenth-century architecture of these features and show the genius of their builder, Robert des Ablèches.

Amongst the works of Art contained in Notre-Dame is a reredos in polychrome sculpture of the fifteenth century, to be found in one of the chapels. The sacristan has treasures to show, amongst which are an ivory coffer with silver mountings and a miraculous chasuble of the seventh century, which belonged to Saint-Regnobert, Bishop of Bayeux. Before leaving the church one should not fail to examine the portail of the south transept, dating from the fourteenth century. It traces in its iconography the life of Saint Thomas of Canterbury. Its doors, embellished with ironwork forged in 1375, are another point of interest.

One is now free to inspect Queen Mathilde's tapestry, which advertises itself by means of photographs and post-cards, both coloured and plain, throughout the streets, at the book-shops, at the stationers', and on various stalls and in many windows. It is taken for granted in Bayeux that this is the chief attraction and many signs, posted by the municipality to forestall questions, point the way to a charming little eighteenth-century hotel, another discarded dwelling of the archbishops. The house, preceded by a small, well-laid-out garden, is wide and shallow, and the honour room, on the first floor, occupies its total width and half its length, with long French windows on two sides which let in abundant light, a very important consideration, since the tapestry, framed in a long, continuous, flat case with glass both sides, makes several times the tour of the room, somewhat after the fashion of the Walls of Troy, doubling and redoubling on itself and leaving a passage between for people to pass along.

I scarcely know what I had expected to find, but no amount of reading or being told had prepared me for its great length, nor for the vivid, living character of the panorama, nor for the impeccable whiteness of the linen band upon which the long epic is worked. I shall hardly be required to remind visitors that the Bayeux Tapestry depicts one of the greatest expeditions ever undertaken—the Conquest of England in 1066 by William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy, who afterwards was known as the Con-

queror. It differs from most of the pictorial presentations of the life of the early Middle Ages known to us in that it records a capital episode, that it is a faithful and exhaustive history of one of the half-dozen acts essential to the remaking of Europe—hence its immense documentary importance.

In spite of much learned opposition the tapestry is currently believed to be the work of William's wife, Matilda of Flanders, who is described as surrounded and assisted by her ladies-in-waiting, all passionately devoted to embroidering for posterity the heroic deeds of her lord : but whether it is really her work, or whether it was a commission ordered by Bishop Odo for his cathedral, can now only be a matter of conjecture. Certainly it was produced within the lifetime of persons who could remember the invaders of England, if it is not indeed contemporary with the invasion itself and produced under the direction of those who took part in the expedition.

The story, which runs the length of a seamless band of linen two hundred and thirty feet long by about twenty inches wide, begins with a scene in which Edward the Confessor, seated in the palace of Westminster, charges his nephew, Harold, to go and announce to William that he has been named successor to the English throne. Throughout the action of the drama which ensues and which is embroidered in worsteds of eight colours in seventy-two scenes, each named in Latin by the designer, we get frequent portraits of the principal actors—Edward the Confessor, Harold, William, and Odo, the war-like Bishop. There are animated scenes of arrival and departure, of boats at sea, and feasts on land. The scene shifts as the story grows from Bosham, a tiny port in Sussex whence Harold took his departure, to France, where we find ourselves in the ducal domain of Guy de Ponthieu ; to Beaurin, where Harold is imprisoned ; to William's château at Rouen ; to Dinan during a spirited attack ; etc. We witness the death and interment of Edward in Westminster Abbey, and are present at the coronation of Harold. The series ends

with the Battle of Hastings and the flight of the English, with the death of Harold and his companions.

There are many little guide-books which give the story in all of its detail, and since every scene is named it is an easy matter to follow the action. As for its extraordinary fame, that is a recent matter, for the tapestry had only a very local celebrity for many centuries. An old record or inventory of the ornaments belonging to the cathedral makes the first known mention of it, in the year 1476. Here it is described :

*'Item une tente très-longue et étroite, de telle à broderie de ymages et escripteaulx faisans representation de la conquête d'Angleterre, laquelle est tendue environ la nief de l'église, le jour et par octaves des reliques.'*

Bayeux always called it the *Toilette du duc Guillaume*, and though it was revered and respected and exhibited on fête days, as we have mentioned, it appears to have attracted no attention outside of its province until the year 1724, when an illuminated drawing of a part of it, that had somehow been made, chanced to fall into the hands of an antiquary called Lancelot, who prepared and read a learned paper upon it before the Academy. The drawing itself was then many centuries old, and Lancelot supposed it to be from a bas-relief, a painting, or a glass window. This article or paper, however, brought the matter to the attention of the celebrated Père de Montfaucon and it was due to his zeal that its origin was traced. Montfaucon put it into his book on historic monuments of the French Monarchy, and so gradually the tapestry became famous.

It escaped the Revolution by a miracle, for it is told that when, in 1792, the Bayeux volunteers needed a covering for their military wagon, the *toilette du duc Guillaume* was pressed into service, and only rescued by an intelligent citizen who rushed off to buy a substitute, paying for it out of his own pocket, and carrying the precious relic to his study to await more peaceful times. In 1803 Napoleon showed it in the Louvre, which proves how little of importance escaped his vigilant eye, and the following year it was

passed over to the custody of the city of Bayeux, where it was shown to visitors by being rolled from one cylinder to another across a table. It could not have been too preciously guarded, for at some time, probably during this last stage of its history, a small piece was cut off the border by some zealous souvenir collector and found its way into the South Kensington Museum. The place was carefully repaired and may still be seen, while below in a frame, covered with glass, is the stolen fragment which the directors of the South Kensington Museum returned to Bayeux in 1872. By this time the tapestry had been lined and repaired and mounted in permanent fashion.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### ROUEN

I HAVE been many times to Rouen, but no later visit has ever effaced the memory of the first one, and I envy anybody who has before him the discovery of the capital of Normandy. Any way of coming is good enough, and every approach throws into relief the magnificent cathedral as the centre of a rich collection of medieval buildings, which give substance and reality to the traditions of the place. Rouen gains enormously in picturesqueness by its situation on the banks of the Seine. An immensely rich city, an important river port, there is character and flavour in its dual existence. Its commerce is amphibious, it travels as readily by land as by sea, and the activity of the city in its industrial aspects mingles its local colour with the exotic note brought in by the shipping, lying thick against the wharves or floating about in mid-stream, and contrasts oddly with the antiquities, at the same time taking them into account and accommodating itself to them. Rouen is a great centre for cotton mills, exporting thousands of tons of printed cotton fabrics, known the world over as *rouenneries*; but the clean, cheerful, luxurious city, which modern prosperity has developed about the original, leaves primitive Rouen intact, untouched, unspoiled, as though the ancient splendours were proof against change.

If all approaches are good, some are better than others, and blessed are they who first see Rouen from the deck of one of the little river boats that journey up the Seine at certain seasons from Le Havre. Normandy is essentially a country for loiterers. To savour its charm one

must not be in a hurry and the little boat disposes of haste. To begin with, you must wait for it—it does not run every day. In the second place, it stops at a number of charming places and dawdles about and wastes your time until time ceases to have value, and then you are in a proper state of mind to enter into the spirit of this immense orchard dotted all over with delightful little villages. If you have got quite into the proper spirit you will not fail to get off the steamer at Caudebec-en-Caux and treat yourself to the sight of its venerable houses and its exquisite church of Notre-Dame, whose flamboyant architecture is a Mecca for the knowing ones and whose *flèche* presides over its animated port. Should you be in great luck and find that your visit coincides with the second day of the new moon, you may see the famous *mascaret*, a long tidal wave caused by the combat between the outgoing and incoming tides which rush together here.

While you are at Caudebec you may as well see Jumièges and Saint-Wandrille, two glorious ruined abbeys situated in the most superb country—there is a little *départemental* train from Caudebec and you may pick up the boat again at Jumièges another day. And now having acquired a zest for errancy and penetrated a little into the soul of Normandy you will feel, I am sure, how much Rouen is of a piece with that delightful province—that although Paris may not be France, Rouen is Normandy. You will see it, as you approach your journey's end, from a distance and across the water, standing out in silhouette, and the cathedral, with its gigantic *flèche* and its bewilderingly beautiful Tour de Beurre, taking the usual advantage of the Gothic mass in its relation to its environment, appearing to be greater in extent than the whole great town which it swallows up and nullifies in its vast shadow.

If there is a lovelier way, a more dramatic way than this to see Rouen, it is from the heights of Bon Secours, descending upon it by that winding road that debouches upon the quay. The bird's-eye view again proves the impotence of secular buildings to compete with the house

of God. The cathedral dominates everything and makes the pivotal point of a view that will not easily be forgotten. To drive through Normandy, or better still to bicycle or to walk, in spring, when the apple trees are in blossom, and to arrive at Rouen across the hills by way of Bon Secours, is one of the rarest pleasures that this world has to offer.

Yet when I first saw Rouen it was not by either of these routes, nor with any such sophisticated knowledge of how it should be done. I crossed the Channel from Newhaven on a beautiful night early in the month of June, alone, having cut myself deliberately adrift from companions with more French and more experience than myself. We docked at Dieppe at about two o'clock in the morning, boarding at once the train that stood ready at the maritime station beside the boat. The train dashed through an unknown country in absolute darkness for a long time without stopping ; but finally, at about five o'clock, drew up at a station. It was still only the grey of the morning and the sound that a guard was making outside was unintelligible to me, but thinking it must be Rouen, though by no means sure, I seized my luggage and jumped out, exceedingly thrilled and just a little frightened to be standing for the first time upon the soil of France. An intelligent porter with a vast experience of foreigners, I suspect, assured me that I was right, snatched up my bags and, divining my purpose, ran with them to the *consigne*, where he deposited them for me, handing me the tickets and writing down for me on a bit of paper the hours of departure of the afternoon trains for Paris.

I had a memorable cup of coffee and some fresh rolls and butter on the terrace of a small and spotless establishment just the other side of the bridge which crosses the railway tracks, perhaps in the Rue Verte, and in the deliciousness of the early dawn walked away down the street to the statue of Joan of Arc, expecting that anything as big as a cathedral would be visible from this open place ; but it, with the other churches, had subsided behind the

modest houses of the immediate foreground and I saw nothing to guide me. Fortunately a fresh-faced market woman, with a huge basket of cabbages and lettuces on her arm, came bustling across the opening just then and I contrived to ask my way. She was greatly puzzled to understand me at first, but finally a light broke over her honest face and echoing my words with a better intonation—*Ah, la cathédrale*—she set down her basket the better to tell me, to show me, to point and gesticulate, the turns I should have to make, and she would, I think, surely have come with me that I might not go astray (as I did) but that her household, or her business, was waiting for her to return with her great burden.

I set out bravely and with much assurance in the direction indicated and soon found myself in a tangle of ancient streets which led me into the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville and before the church of Saint-Ouen, which I took most certainly to be the *cathédrale*, as anybody indeed might, for it is as large or larger than Notre-Dame and is, as the guide-books say, 'its superior in elegance and in the perfect harmony of its style'. Most of it is early fourteenth century, except the west portail, which is a restoration belonging to the middle of the last century, as is only too evident in its dryness and the dead colour of its stone.

The mystery of the interior drew me almost immediately, the central door being wide open to admit the morning air, and I had not long been in, standing strangely exalted by the harmony of its grandiose proportions, when I met a priest, or more probably a sacristan, who sold me a little ticket for one franc, which allowed me to go up into the triforium and the outer gallery and to wander unmolested and alone all over the roof and upon the magnificent central tower, the 'Couronne de Normandie', where I saw the sun rise over one of the grandest prospects of the world. I had this gorgeous panorama absolutely to myself and remained for hours up there in that Gothic forest of pinnacles, buttresses, towers, turrets; mounting, descending, exploring, until the sun blazed full upon the apse and the

sky above changed from palest sapphire to the full daylight blue of a heavenly day.

From this amazing vantage point I found the real cathedral and discovered the exquisite church of Saint-Maclou and saw and decided to climb the winding road leading to Bon Secours. Rouen lay at my feet like a great map and I orientated myself perfectly before descending the spiral stone stairways into the now gorgeously illuminated church, for the sun was filtering in through the stained-glass windows of the choir and the glorious rose of the south transept, one of the most beautiful of Gothic art, was glowing and sparkling like a great jewel in the clear morning light. I made here some memories which will never forsake me, but it was only the beginning of a perfect day.

I left Saint-Ouen by its south door, which opens upon an elegant porch with pedentives. This portail, called the Marmousets because of the imagery which adorns it, is crowned with a pediment bearing a statue of Saint-Ouen, one of the early bishops of Rouen, and the patron saint of the church. The reliefs over the door represent the death and assumption of the Virgin. A small street faces the porch and taking it in place of the Rue de la République, where the tramway runs, it brought me straight to the greatest treasure of Rouen, the little church of Saint-Maclou. Quite small and chiselled like a reliquary, this *chef-d'œuvre* of flamboyant Gothic—it dates from 1437—is unique and memorable because of its charming, pentagonal porch, which gives it a bulging front of elaborate lacework in stone above which rises a high *flèche*. The story goes that when Pierre Lescot, the architect of the Louvre, was looking for a sculptor to execute the details of his design, he found Jean Goujon working upon the doors of Saint-Maclou. These doors, sheltered by the pentagonal porch, are one of the chief beauties of the church and their exquisitely carved reliefs are attributed to the sculptor who afterwards became so famous. In their masterly elaboration they have often been compared to the doors of the famous baptistry of Florence. Inside, aside

from its general charm, there are some fine windows of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a stylistic organ of the François I period, and a Gothic stairway leading to it, which invite attention.

For an early riser my morning seemed well gone before I found myself finally in the narrow parvis before the cathedral itself, to which, however, everything had most excellently led up. We know that in ancient times the people loved to build their dwellings close up under the wing of the mother church. Notre-Dame of Rouen has kept her chickens nearer to her great flanks than most cathedrals. The streets which surround her are old and narrow, and there is much ado to get a proper distance between yourself and the three portals ; but for this very reason the church appears to be the more part and parcel of the city. The western façade is a strange one, remarkable for the detachment of its two towers, between which has been, as it were, suspended a richly sculptured veil of stone. The effect is one of dazzling grandeur and one is easily persuaded that nothing more beautiful than this was ever conceived by the Gothic mind. In this façade, which Monet has made the subject of a whole series of magnificent canvases, we may follow the evolution of Gothic architecture in all its plenitude from the Roman departure to the full flowering of the flamboyant style.

If you will flatten yourself well up against the shops which lie upon the *place*, or parvis, and in which you may afterwards buy postcards by way of compensation for the liberty, you may drink in comfortably the extraordinary beauty of this façade, which is certainly unrivalled elsewhere. If it represents a mixture of styles, or a development of a style, so much the better for following the history of the building. That history is briefly this : Of the Celtic Rotomagus the first bishops were Nicaise, Mellon, Ouen, and Romain, who afterwards became saints, and Prétextat, the godfather of Mérowig, whom Frédégonde had assassinated on the steps of the high altar of the cathedral, on a Sunday, the 24 February, 586, who might well too have

been canonized. As early as the third century Saint-Nicaise established the seat of the archbishop of Rouen, and his successor erected the first cathedral, which Saint-Vitrice rebuilt at the end of the fourth century. In the seventh century Saint-Romain enriched the church, and one of his successors, Saint-Ouen, who was at the same time archbishop and minister to Dagobert, obtained for his cathedral important privileges.

Rouen was taken and pillaged by the Viking Ogier the Dane before the Normans under Rollon sacked it and, having almost completely demolished it, made him master of the province. In 913, after his conversion to Catholicism, this first duke of Normandy applied himself to repairing the ruins which he had amassed and began the construction of a new cathedral in which he was interred in 931; his grandson, Richard I, continued his work, while the Duchesse de Gonnor, his wife, embroidered silken draperies to decorate the basilica, which was enlarged by a choir and apse by their son, Robert, Archbishop of Rouen.

In 1055 the first stone of the tower, which since 1477 has borne the name of Saint-Romain, was laid, and the interior was far enough along in 1063 to permit the dedication of the church, to Saint-Etienne, in the presence of William the Conqueror. Unfortunately in the year 1110 the church was struck by lightning and greatly injured; this disaster was scarcely repaired when a tremendous fire reduced it and most of the city to ashes on Easter Day in the year 1200.

Of the old cathedral, which occupied the same surface as the present one, nothing remained but the Tour Saint-Romain and the two lateral portails. The new construction was confided to an architect of undisputed talent who had already proven his ability in the Abbey of Bec. This was Ingelramm or Enguerand. He conceived the plans of a sumptuous monument which should unite all the characteristics and all the refinements of the Gothic style. At the death of Philippe-Auguste (1223) the great work was completely finished in all its structural parts. Ingelramm

seems to have been typical of that Norman architect who prepared a field for future generations to work upon, bestowing his time and thought and labour rather upon an idea that would not only last but grow and ripen into excellence than upon a mere fabric likely to be swept away in the course of a century.<sup>1</sup>

Rouen found itself at once in competition with the magnificent basilicas of the royal domain—Beauvais, Bourges, Reims, Chartres, Amiens—and, as it was not possible to surpass them in proportions, the bishops from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries devoted themselves to the decoration and embellishment of their church, and even made important additions to the relatively modest dimensions of the actual edifice. It is easy to appreciate that the more florid and ornate parts of the principal façade, for instance, such as the lacy veil swung between the two towers, is pure embroidery upon solid structure. It detaches itself as one looks at it or as one looks through it to the massive skeleton which it shields. The Tour de Beurre, too, shows how Rouen grew away from the severity of Coutances, still felt in the Tour Saint-Romain.

The base only of the Tour Saint-Romain is Roman and was saved from the fire of 1200. As it mounts it adopts the transition style and at the top it wears a Gothic crown surmounted by a high-pitched roof, covered with slates. This tower contains the belfry. In 1468 Guillaume Pontifz altered the tower by the introduction of the sixteen arcades which pierce its sides. It was the Cardinal d'Estouteville who gave it the name Saint-Romain. This prelate, who in 1451 had instigated the rehabilitation of Joan of Arc, was a very grand personage. Of Norman origin and allied to the royal family, he had a great number of ecclesiastical titles and lived in princely style, spending money royally, giving and lending large sums generously, and, a great builder, lavishing money on the construction of the towers.

The Tour de Beurre, the right-hand tower, was under-

<sup>1</sup> Rev. J. L. Petit, *Architectural Studies in France*.



taken by the Archbishop Robert de Croixmare, who placed the first stone on the 10 November, 1485. Its name comes from the source of the money with which it was built : the Cardinal Guillaume d'Estouteville gave the faithful of the diocese of Rouen and Evreux permission to eat butter and cream during lent and Robert de Croixmare employed the funds received in recompense for this favour in building this tower.<sup>1</sup> The building proceeded uninterruptedly from 1485 to 1507 and was finished by Jacques Leroux under the Cardinal Georges I d'Amboise, minister to Louis XII. One of the most beautiful towers of the world it gains greatly by its semi-detachment from the body of the cathedral. Upon a mass of noble proportions the builders lavished a great wealth of exquisite stone-carving in that sumptuous style which characterizes the ornamentation at Rouen. This tower is embellished by two rows of statues upon its façade. The first includes figures of the fifteenth century, thought to have been formerly employed upon an earlier portail ; the statues of the second row represent Adam and Eve, several prophets and patriarchs and sibyls. On the east side, which contains the most beautiful of these statues, a window has been completely opened for the passage of a great bell, weighing thirty-six thousand pounds, given by Georges d'Amboise in 1501. This enormous bell, which it took sixteen men to start swinging, was cracked in ringing to celebrate the entry of Louis XVI into Rouen, in 1786, and was converted into canons during the Revolution.

It was the Cardinal d'Amboise, too, who gave the cathedral its beautiful frontispiece which ties the two towers together by a screen of sumptuous stone-carving. Jacques and Roland Leroux, father and son, master masons of Rouen, made this elaborate ornament between the years 1509 and 1530. The colour of the stone greatly heightens the impression of magnificence created by its innumerable statues sheltered by delicate baldaquins, its sharp pinnacles, its profound voussures and the exquisitely fine triangle of

<sup>1</sup> Pommeraye, *Histoire de la Cathédrale de Rouen*.

open-work which rises over the central doorway and is repeated in smaller triangles over the groups of statues. This same device, found also upon Saint-Maclou and Saint-Ouen, is characteristic of the architecture of Rouen.

Pierre Désaubaux, a Norman sculptor, completed the striking effect of the portail by a pediment over the central door, representing the genealogical tree of the Virgin. Cut in relief we see Jesse lying prone upon the ground and out of his side grows the tree on the branches of which stand the chief personages of the family from which our Lord was descended, the highest place being occupied by the Virgin. For this noble work Pierre Désaubaux received the munificent sum of five hundred *livres* ! It is very much mutilated. Ruskin thought the doorways of Rouen to be the 'most exquisite piece of flamboyant work existing'. The tympanums of the other two trace the life of John the Baptist and Saint-Stephen. Set in the centre of the great portail, behind the point of the sharp open-work gable, is the rose window, as beautiful without as within.

The two side doors, the *Portail des Libraires* and the *Portail de la Calende*, both date from the end of the thirteenth century and have many features in common. If the former is the more interesting the latter is the more perfect in style. The *Portail des Libraires* was begun in the reign of Philippe-Auguste. It takes its name from the associations of the little court upon which it opens and in which once upon a time assembled the booksellers of Rouen. This court, which is entered from the Rue Saint-Romain, is enclosed by a second portail in open-work stone and the enclosure, in beautiful flamboyant style, is justly celebrated. The door of the cathedral offers an imposing ensemble of sculpture. It is, as it were, framed by two side walls or wings which make of the entrance an impressive pause before advancing into the interior. We find here, in the niches, five virgins and martyrs: on the right Martha and Mary; on the left Sainte-Geneviève, Saint-Apolline, and Sainte-Marie l'Egyp-

tienne, the latter holding her loaves of bread and covered with her flowing hair; a lion howls at her feet, the one no doubt who helped Zozime to bury her in the desert!

Over the door the archivolt, ornamented with statuettes of angels, apostles, and martyrs, is crowned by a large open-work gable of great elegance. Two panels, the Resurrection and the Last Judgment, partly fill the tympanum, which was never finished. One hundred and fifty medallions of different subjects complete this rich and fantastic ornamentation, forming the most beautiful decorative ensemble imagined by the Middle Ages. These medallions are not to be interpreted otherwise than as purely decorative in their treatment of an immense variety of unrelated subjects, executed with extraordinary mastery and verve.

This portail adjoins the great room of the episcopal palace in which Joan of Arc was condemned on the 9 January, 1431, by the Bishop of Beauvais, Pierre Cauchon, and the inquisitor Le Maître, and in which afterwards her innocence and rehabilitation were proclaimed on the 7 July, 1456, by the Archbishop of Reims, Jean Juvénal des Ursins, assisted by Guillaume Chartier, Bishop of Paris, Richard Olivier, Bishop of Coutances, and the inquisitor Jean Bréal. 'It was at Rouen that the final audience was held completing that which had opened the trial at Notre-Dame of Paris. Rouen saw the reparation as Rouen had seen the forfeit, Rouen reconquered could not accept the shame of the Place du Vieux-Marché.'<sup>1</sup>

The *Portail de la Calende* was so called because of a brotherhood which met here at the calendes of each month. It is particularly beautiful because of the two buttresses with their carving which frame the doorway repeating its design and its accessories by a handsomely balanced composition. The abundant sculpture of this doorway, which is much restored, includes an admirable group in high relief representing the crowning of the Virgin. The surbase again is elaborated with numerous medallions filled with sculpture.

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel Hanotaux, *Jeanne d'Arc*.

Although the chief part of the lantern tower belongs to the thirteenth century it is the modern *flèche* which attracts attention by its great and disproportionate height. It rises one hundred and fifty *mètres* above the floor of the church and weighs seven hundred and forty tons. Camille Mauclair, who writes charmingly of Normandy, gets round the difficulty of its ugliness by saying with Gallic suavity that it is 'as ingenious as a contemporary creation trying to complete the works of an incomparable age can be'.

The interior of Notre-Dame has an intensely religious character. Less perfect than many another cathedral in its style, it is warm, inviting, comforting, soothing, mysterious, and in short possesses to a profound degree the qualities which make a cathedral a refuge and strength to those in need of spiritual consolation. Emile Mâle, who writes so engagingly of cathedrals,<sup>1</sup> compares Rouen to a rich book of the Hours, where God, the Virgin, and the saints occupy the middle of the pages, while fancy plays in the margins. 'Penetrate into the cathedral', he says. 'The sublimity of the great vertical lines acts first upon the soul. It is impossible to enter the great nave of Amiens without feeling purified. The church by its beauty acts as a Sacrament. . . . The cathedral like the plain, like the forest, has its atmosphere, its perfume, its light, its chiaroscuro, its shades. Its great rose, behind which the sun sets, seems in the evening hours to be the sun itself, ready to disappear on the borders of a marvellous forest. But it is a transfigured world where light is more effulgent than that of reality, where shade is more mysterious. Already we feel in the breast of the celestial Jerusalem, the future city. We feel profound peace. The noise of life breaks upon the walls of the sanctuary and becomes a far-off rumble.'

The beautiful thoughts of this beautiful book come back to one in this beautiful place where they are, it seems to me, supremely applicable, supremely true. There is nothing at Rouen, as at Beauvais, at Bourges, at Amiens, too,

<sup>1</sup> Emile Mâle, *L'Art religieux du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle en France*.



ROUEN  
THE TRANSEPT



or at Albi, to take one's breath away. If there is less exaltation there is more mystery, more depth. The walls close round one more protectingly—there is more love.

Something of this is due to the relative narrowness of the nave in contrast to the great width of the façade. This effect is very noticeable as one steps inside the church, expecting a more vast enclosure to follow the immensity of the portail. Here, I think, we have an illustration of what the Reverend J. L. Petit had in mind when he said that 'the Norman architect seems always to have fixed his eye upon some future development', that 'he threw out his design, simple and frequently even naked in point of ornament . . . but elaborate in construction, and carefully arranged its proportions as a matter for a succeeding generation to work upon'. All the original proportions of Rouen were moderate as the original ornamentation was simple. Notre-Dame of Paris, for example, is eighty-five feet longer (not counting the Virgin's Chapel of Rouen, which is an addition), twenty-three feet wider, and twenty-three feet higher than Notre-Dame of Rouen. This results that the features of the Norman cathedral are brought into more intimate relation with the congregation, they are more tangible, and one has more literally that sensation, so often spoken of in descriptions of Gothic architecture, of wandering in a forest. At Amiens, at Beauvais, at Bourges, at Chartres, at Reims, one stands as in a vast pine wood of primeval growth, overwhelmed and overcome—amazed that columns so slender can carry vaulting to such prodigious heights. The sturdy columns which support the roof of Rouen do not travel so far before breaking out in foliated capitals which support the arches of the bays, after which, above the clerestory, the ribs of the vaulting curve over us like the friendly branches of the elm. The eye is not surprised and baffled, it is pleased and satisfied, and the spiritual significance of the cathedral does not soar away beyond the ken of the finite mind.

Notre-Dame of Rouen is one of those cathedrals whose

interiors lend themselves especially to vistas, to 'points of view'. Only less, possibly, than Chartres is Rouen an artists' cathedral; its aisles, its transeps, its ambulatory, its choir, group themselves in endless compositions, enlivened by glimpses of its gorgeous windows, their colourful glass emphasizing the mystery of its dusky light. There are many things to discover in the chapels of the side aisles, which are additions dating from the fourteenth century, gifts from the corporations and brotherhoods as their growing prosperity inspired them to generosity. The famous *escalier de la Libraire*, at the end of the north transept, is one of the chief beauties and originalities of the interior. All the upper part is modern addition, for as designed it comprised but two flights of steps, the angles furnished with superb pinnacles. It is in the flamboyant style, its vaulted vestibule exquisitely proportioned, its ornamental sculpture treated with verve. It led to the canons' library, which the Cardinal d'Estouteville had built, by Guillaume Pontifz, in 1424.

The treasures of the ambulatory and Virgin's Chapel are visible only upon application to one of the Swiss, whose picturesque costumes make in themselves a feature of the interior. The splendours of the cathedral are behind those *grilles* which shut off the choir and apse from the main body of the church. Three chapels open from this ambulatory; the deepest one, in the centre, dedicated to the Virgin, having been built between 1302 and 1320 by Jean Davi. This chapel holds the most beautiful mausoleums of the cathedral and of Normandy, monuments of great interest historically and artistically.

The oldest is the Gothic tomb of Pierre de Brézé, the first one on the left as one enters. It has been despoiled of its effigies, but is still an impressive monument. The defunct was *sénéchal* of Anjou and of Normandy as well as a great soldier who figured gloriously in all the wars of Charles VII. In consideration of his good offices in helping to drive the English out of Normandy, Charles rewarded him by the gift of some choice estates and gave him impor-



tance in the affairs of the kingdom, and he gained distinction particularly in establishing a permanent army and in reforms of justice and finance. When Louis XI succeeded to the throne he looked upon Pierre de Brézé as a formidable rival and shut him up in the Château of Loches until he could arrange some means of making him innocuous. In order to bind him to their mutual interests he decided to marry his own half-sister Charlotte, a natural daughter of his father's union with Agnès Sorel, to de Brézé's son, and this being accomplished he freed his enemy and gave him back his titles and estates. However, the king could not forgive him his power and influence over the people, and in an effort to get rid of him sent him to the assistance of Marguerite d'Anjou, Henry VI's unfortunate queen, in the wars which followed her husband's death. Pierre de Brézé was finally killed in a charge at Montlhéry, in 1465.

The richest tomb, in point of view of elegant architecture and elaborate sculpture, is that of the Cardinals of Amboise, Georges I, Louis XII's powerful minister, and Georges II, his nephew, who are portrayed kneeling upon the sarcophagus, their hands joined in an attitude of prayer. Both of these men were Archbishops of Rouen, and the elder was one of the most generous donors to the cathedral, having, as has been noted, given the beautiful frontispiece, which hangs between the towers of the principal façade. It was Georges I who provided for this sumptuous monument, leaving his nephew and successor the sum of two thousand *écus* to pay for it. Roland Leroux was the architect, and, with the sculptors Désaubaux and Throrouin and André le Flament, worked ten years upon its magnificent ensemble, which is considered one of the most splendid works of the Renaissance. The Cardinals, in robes of state, kneel upon a rich table, its base ornamented with allegorical representations of Faith, Charity, Prudence, Temperance, Justice, and Force, carrying the traditional emblems of these virtues. These charmingly serious little figures stand upon elegant sockets and under curved canopies, separated by the forms which support the

table. The background of the Cardinals corresponds in workmanship to the base. We see Saint George and the Dragon in the centre, in bas-relief, and small statues of Christ, the Virgin, and six saints, the whole covered by an admirable vaulting in the form of a canopy, while above the projecting surface is adorned with more charming sculpture representing little scenes and devices and emblems of the Cardinal's family.

The tomb was designed to carry only the statue of the great Georges d'Amboise, and we read upon a tablet of black marble an inscription of which this is the translation : ' I was the pastor of the clergy, the father of the people. The golden lily, the oak itself were subject to me. Here I lie dead. Honours are extinguished by death, but virtue knows no death and flourishes with it.' The superiority of the first statue over the second will be readily perceived. It portrays the great Georges and is of the epoch, dating from 1520 to 1522. But at about this time Georges II decided to have his sepulchre also with that of his uncle and ordered Jean Goujou to make a second kneeling figure for the table, representing himself in his archbishop's costume. Three years later he was promoted to cardinal and not being satisfied to go down to posterity as simple archbishop, he made a will in 1550, on the eve of his death, ordering a new statue of himself to be made dressed in his cardinal's robes. This was done ; the beautiful work of Goujon was dismantled and cast aside to make way for the present heavy, awkward figure.<sup>1</sup>

This tomb was the most magnificent addition to the cathedral since its erection, and it excited the greatest admiration throughout the whole of the province. It had been in place about six years when another very distinguished personage died. This was Louis de Brézé, *grand sénéchal* of Normandy, and grandson of Pierre de Brézé whose tomb we have already examined. His widow was the famous Dianne de Poytiers and she determined to build a monument to her husband which should equal if

<sup>1</sup> M. A. Delville, *Les Tombeaux de la Cathédrale de Rouen*.

not excel the Cardinal's mausoleum. The *sénéchal's* funeral was one of the greatest spectacles which Notre-Dame had ever seen or was to see. He died at the Château d'Anet and his body was brought for burial in the cathedral, the procession moving slowly across Normandy accompanied by all the curious features of medieval pageantry. The strangest sight of all was the effigy of the departed, dressed as in life, lying upon the bier, preceded by the riderless horse and seven mounted gentlemen of his household each carrying standards and emblems of the deceased.

When the cortège reached the cathedral the catafalque was deposited before the tomb containing the heart of Charles V, who was Louis de Brézé's ancestor on his mother's side, while the extraordinary ceremony of farewell took place. The mourners advanced one at a time and placed their trophies before the effigy and kissed it, while others of the knight's household, the butler, the barber, the chief steward, did the same. On the following day mass was said for the departed, and the body was then deposited in the grave prepared for it beside the tomb of de Brézé's grandfather. Georges d'Amboise II presided.

The striking feature of the tomb is the recumbent figure of the defunct as he appeared after death, attributed to Jean Goujon, and considered one of the noblest statues of this kind. It lies upon the table or sarcophagus; at the head of the figure, partly concealed by the fluted columns of the lower story, is a kneeling statue of Dianne de Poytiers in her widow's weeds; at the foot is a Virgin and Child. Upon the wall behind the effigy are two tablets bearing inscriptions between which once stood a statue of the *sénéchal* as he appeared in life and over the top, in the second story of the monument is another representation of him—an equestrian portrait wearing full armour and charging forth as into battle.

This monument was somewhat mutilated by the Revolutionists, but, together with the Cardinal's tomb, owes its excellent preservation to the presence of mind of an administrator who let the chapel as a storage-place for hay during

the Reign of Terror, so that the tombs were completely buried and their existence either unsuspected or forgotten.

The ambulatory contains two interesting tombs, those of Henri le Jeune, son of Henry II, King of England and Duke of Normandy, and of Richard Cœur de Lion, his brother. To this part of the church belong too the most magnificent of Rouen's windows, a series of thirteenth-century glass, almost intact, dating from 1220 to 1240. The great fire of 1200 which destroyed the earlier cathedral left nothing of the earlier glass, but as the new construction progressed the church was entirely fitted with glass of the epoch. Rouen was at one time as magnificent as Chartres in this respect, for all its lower windows were put in before 1250. Unfortunately this beauty was not respected and it is to the ambulatory that we must turn to form an idea of what the original splendour was.

Beginning at the left-hand side, the first window, dedicated to Saint-Julien l'Hospitalier, was given by the fishmongers of Rouen. It is of particular interest on account of having inspired Gustave Flaubert to write a famous story. On the other side of the chapel which intervenes here are two lancets of extraordinary interest, not only because of their picturesque pastoral scenes, which tell the story of Joseph and his brethren, but on account of the fact that they are signed, and signatures are so rare that this is the only one extant to-day upon a thirteenth-century window. Upon a phylactery at the bottom of the right-hand lancet one may read: '*Clemens vitrearius carnotensis m(e fecit)*—Clément, glass-worker of Chartres made me.' This curious legend explains the numerous affinities that exist between this group of windows and those of the ambulatory of Chartres. The windows were the gift of the cloth-workers of Rouen.

Exactly opposite, on the other side of the Virgin's Chapel, a Passion window with interesting symbolism belongs to the family of the New Alliance, of which are found at Bourges and at Chartres such beautiful examples. The Good Samaritan of the next window is quite different from

those windows at Sens, at Chartres, and at Bourges, which also trace the story of the traveller of Jericho ; it follows in its imagery the simple story as told by the Gospels. The chapel which follows is adorned with windows dedicated to Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

If these are the oldest windows in the cathedral the latest one of importance is the rose of the nave which was installed in the sixteenth century as part of the magnificent gifts of the Cardinal d'Amboise. I have passed rapidly over this interesting subject as those seriously inclined to study the glass of Rouen will find guides full of detailed information and may follow at their leisure the whole series of windows, which illustrate every stage of the art from the first years of the thirteenth century to the end of the sixteenth century.

But in the meantime an excellent lunch may be spoiling at the ' Couronne de Normandie ', on the Place du Vieux Marché (where Joan of Arc was burned in 1431), and which some people call the best restaurant in France. There is the wonderful Hôtel de Bourtheroulde to be seen for its fifteenth-century architecture and its famous panels in stone, some of which contain vivid scenes connected with the interview on the ' Field of the Cloth of Gold '. There is the charming house called ' Maison de Dianne de Poytiers ' to be visited, the Museum, a very fine one, to inspect, and the Tour Jeanne d'Arc, the donjon of a castle built by Philippe-Auguste in 1207, in which the heroine may have been imprisoned, to be dealt with. In short Rouen is a very choice and beautiful place ; it will reward as much time and as many visits as one may feel inclined to devote to it. It is no ordinary provincial town whose sights and interests are exhausted in a brief survey ; it grows upon one with acquaintance, and the more that one knows of its past the more does it command affection and respect.

On no account should the view from Bon Secours be missed. On that superb June day, when I made my initial entry into France, I climbed up there at about the noon

hour and sat upon the grass of the slope near the monument to Joan of Arc musing upon the mystery of the voyage and my emotional morning, in that state of lassitude which, by eliminating details, sharpens the faculties for pleasure. As I sat drowsing, the bells of the church of Bon Secours broke into tumultuous ringing of the Angelus—great clarion notes, pealing and reverberating, clanging and blending together in wildest melody—it was Poe's poem, the complete revelation, rung into my listening ear—' bells, bells, bells ! '

## CHAPTER XIX

### TOURS AND LE MANS

**A** LITTLE journey highly to be recommended to travellers is that which includes, in a circuit of about three hundred and forty miles, the magnificent cathedrals of Tours, Le Mans, and Chartres. The round, which carries the visitor not farther than one hundred and forty-five miles from Paris, may be made in either direction, but in order to end with a clear vision of the supreme glories of Chartres, let us start from the Quai d'Orsay early on a fine morning for Tours. The journey takes us into the garden of France, into France herself, for no part of this admirable country is more characteristically national. 'It is the land of Rabelais, of Descartes, of Balzac, of good books and good company, as well as good dinners and good houses.'<sup>1</sup> It is a land of old châteaux, to whose setting the Loire gives great style. The approach runs through charming level country growing in attractiveness until glimpses of the river begin to figure in the compositions of vineyards and orchards, and at last we travel definitely beside it, looking across at Chaumont or at Amboise, through the gay light reflected from its placid bosom.

There is much at Tours to compete with its charming cathedral so that I am afraid that this delightful monument upon which generations of builders have lavished so much loving care does not always receive its full measure of attention. Saint-Gatien of Tours is one of the several cathedrals pointed out as 'the most beautiful'. It shares

<sup>1</sup> Henry James, *A Little Tour in France*.

this distinction with Strasbourg notably and perhaps with even more reason. The cathedral of Tours is nothing if not beautiful—from its graceful towers to its exquisite windows and its exceedingly choice tomb of the infants of Charles VIII. If it has not 'grandiose proportions', sublimity of spires, nor glories of sculpture (these latter having been ravaged by the Revolution); it has, on the other hand, great perfection in all its parts, a sort of polish and refinement which is essentially of the Touraine. It is just such a cathedral as might be expected in Tours. Although it took centuries to build, those centuries were employed in embellishing and beautifying the original plan and in rendering all its parts harmonious. Of this the most striking instance is the suavity with which Gothic towers flower into Renaissance terminations with no violence to the most sensitive eye.

The actual edifice is almost entirely the result of a total reconstruction of the primitive cathedral undertaken in about the year 1220, at the time when religious architecture had just produced the ogival style, and patiently pursued over three centuries until the year 1547. From this deliberation was born the proverb: '*C'est long comme l'œuvre de Saint-Maurice*', for under the name of this saint the cathedral was known at one time. The work proceeded slowly and with frequent interruptions in spite of generous gifts from Saint-Louis and his mother and later Pope John XXII, and was only finished thanks to the rich offerings of members of the *Confrérie de Monseigneur Saint-Gatien*, aided by the chapter, Charles VI and Charles VII, who gave money and by the Popes Eugene IV, Sixtus IV, and Innocent VIII, who granted indulgences to those who contributed to its construction. Finished in 1547 the cathedral contains in its ensemble a remarkable example of all the styles which succeeded the Romanesque until the birth of Renaissance. Its choir is thirteenth century, its transepts fourteenth, its nave middle fourteenth to late fifteenth, as it grows from the transepts to the portail, while the portail is flamboyant Gothic crowned by the first



appearance of the Renaissance. There are many instances of such combinations in French churches, but none in which the development is so easy, so logical, and so smoothly accomplished.

In the second book of his *Histoire des Francs*, Grégoire de Tours recounts the birth of his cathedral: 'In the first year of the reign of Constans (338) Litorius, or Lidoire, a citizen of the city, was ordained second bishop of Tours. It was he who built inside the walls the first church, for the Christians had become numerous enough; and of the house of a senator he made the first basilica.' No cathedral and few ancient churches can furnish an act of baptism so authentic, countersigned by such a hand; for this scholar was Bishop of Tours in the sixth century.

The first bishop charged officially to preach the Gospel to the Turons was Gatianus, or Gatien, who appeared in this place in the year 250. He had no doubt been preceded by earlier missionaries, who had sooner or later suffered martyrdom. Such missionaries came from Rome, or the Orient, to most of the large cities of Gaul, and from the year 57 Saint Paul had sung of their victorious march over the roads opened by the Emperor Claudius through the provinces, flinging to the Pagan world this defiance: 'Their voice rings throughout the world: their word reaches to the extremities of the earth.'

Gatianus was received coldly. The Turons were a proud race, attached to their sweet soil and their traditions of easy morals: so the people, and especially the nobles, took no pains to disguise their ill-humour towards this stranger who came to trouble their peace. He was above all a Roman, and at the end of the third century Rome and all that came out of it exasperated the people of Gaul. Gatien therefore was obliged to take refuge in the caves hollowed out of the rocks on the other side of the Loire, or to hide amongst the tombs of the Christian cemetery, in the poorest quarter. There the faithful united around a funeral chapel, dedicated to the Virgin, to Notre-Dame la Pauvre, and this was the first Christian church of Tours.

Gatianus, whose life was one of pathetic and sublime devotion, died in about the year 300, worn out by work and privation. His disciples were chiefly amongst the poor and distressed of the outlying populations of Tours, but with these there were also a few inhabitants of the city, patricians and senators, and one of them, a member of the rich family of the Litorii, offered his house as a refuge in which secret assemblages of the faithful united, as at Bourges the first converts assembled in the house of Léocade. A member of this generous family of the Litorii was chosen bishop thirty-seven years after the death of Gatianus.

Now almost all the churches of Gaul were built over the ruins of temples to Venus or Isis: Paris, Chartres, Amiens, Reims, all had this origin, while at Tours, as at Bourges, the cathedral began in a private house. Since in those days a cathedral must be dedicated either to a martyr or to the Virgin, and Gatianus had died a natural death, the church which he founded could not bear his name. It was called at first simply the '*Maison de Lidoire*', 'the Church', until finally, in the thirteenth century, the name Saint-Gatien had grown upon it insensibly, nobody knew how, and so Saint-Gatien it remains.

Amongst its early bishops was Saint-Martin, in his day a brilliant missionary and a worker of miracles, but whose fame rests chiefly now upon that small incident in his life, so much pictured in glass and sculptured in stone upon the cathedrals, in which he is seen dividing his cloak with a beggar at the gate of Amiens. The relics of Saint-Martin reposed in the cathedral from the beginning under its altar, and in the eighth century there was some attempt to call the church after its Saint Bishop, but without permanent success.

One of the most beautiful features of the façade is the device, inspired by the cathedral of Bourges and known there as the *grand houteau*: this is the rose window supported by lancets in one great composition which fills the end wall of the nave from within and occupies all the width between the towers without. Jean Dammartin,

who designed the façade of Tours, was the nephew of Guy Dammartin, the Duke of Berry's architect, and the great designer of Bourges; hence this beautiful device, original at Bourges, comes as it were by legitimate inheritance to Tours. Another great beauty of the portail is similar to one already admired at Reims, where the tympanums instead of being filled with sculptured stone are of glass, with this difference that while at Reims the glass is in the form of roses, at Tours it is in three parts, charming in form, filling not only the tympanum proper but two panels under it. The effect of this from inside, together with the rose over eight lances upon four wider lances, is of a front all open-work, making a superb end to the nave.

The choir is all glass. There are fifteen glorious thirteenth-century windows in the clerestory and three chapels full of glass of the same epoch in the end of the apse. In respect of glass Tours ranks only after Chartres and Bourges and in company with Le Mans and Troyes. The clerestory windows represent the lives of saints, amongst which Saint-Martin figures prominently, performing his familiar act of charity.

The famous little tomb of the infant children of Charles VIII and Anne of Brittany stands in the chapel of the south transept, having been brought to the cathedral in 1815 from the abbey church of Saint-Martin, or rather from the *préfecture* where it was put for safety during the Reign of Terror. No one knows for certain who made it, but it is probably the work of Michel Colombe and Jerome of Fiesole—the former being the designer and sculptor of the children and the latter the carver of the arabesques of the sarcophagus and the base. It was finished in 1505, and put in place the following year.

The little dauphins lie side by side on a stone which serves as lid to their sarcophagus, their hands joined in the attitude of prayer. They are clothed in royal robes, seeded with fleurs-de-lis and dolphins, emblems of their race and rank. At their feet two angels smaller than themselves support the escutcheons of France—shields

blazoned with fleurs-de-lis and dolphins—at their heads two similar angels kneel protectingly, their little wings folded. The frieze is decorated with different subjects both religious and fabulous, which the Renaissance artists put on an equal footing. There is Samson victorious over the lion, then vanquished by Delilah, then carrying off the Gates of Gaza : here is Hercules attacking the seven-headed hydra ; etc., etc.

The monument records the ‘inconsolable sorrow’ of Anne de Bretagne, who was so unfortunate in motherhood. Neither as Charles’s Queen nor as Louis XII’s consort were her sons capable of succeeding to the crown. These two by Charles VIII died in infancy, as recorded by two inscriptions on black marble tablets, one at each end of the sarcophagus. Charles Orlana, the first son, died aged three years and three months ; Charles, the second infant, died aged twenty-five days. Both were Dauphin de Viennoys and Comte de Valentinois. The first died at Amboise the 16 December, 1495, and the other the 2 October, 1496. Charles Orlana is bigger than his little brother : he wears the coronet, while the tiny baby wears simply his hood ; both are wrapped in ermine capes. Their little noses are broken, which perhaps increases a pathetic resemblance between the two. The two little angels at the head of the tomb, too, have been badly mutilated. Is there anywhere a more touching mausoleum ?

The pretty cathedral of Tours has seen some fine ceremonies. The marriages of Charles VII and of the Dauphin Louis XI were celebrated here, while René d’Anjou made his entry here, as well as the Duke of Orléans. Other souvenirs abound : under this vaulting Archbishop Geoffroy de Martel, who later accompanied Louis IX to Palestine, received this King surrounded by a cortège of princes, lords, and chevaliers, carrying solemnly their crowns, their swords, and their standards ; and when, two centuries later, France was at the mercy of the Burgundians and the English the basilica saw Joan of Arc prostrate herself before its altars to implore divine benediction and power

to vanquish the enemies of her country; also when she was delivered to the English by the infamous Cauchon and abandoned by her King, her first defender was Hélié de Bourdeilles, Archbishop of Tours. It was from Saint-Gatien too that Henri IV took the *ampoule* of Saint-Martin to be consecrated at Chartres. And it was on this occasion that the King made the much-quoted remark that the two beautiful towers of the cathedral were as jewels without their setting.

There are two times of day when cathedrals are at their best, the early morning and the evening at about sunset. Tours, owing to the beauty and richness of its glass at both ends, lends itself particularly to such fastidious visits. Take, for instance, a day in June, when the days are long and fine, and visit the east end of the cathedral in the early morning, before nine o'clock. The celestial purity and clarity of the glass of the clerestory and chapels is of surprising splendour; it has the clean, clear-cut quality of the sky at dawn. Here is sufficient depth and shadow to give relief to the colours, whereas the roses of the transept, lovely as they are, can never be seen to the same advantage owing to the intense whiteness of the surrounding walls upon which falls the harsh light of clear windows. But re-enter the cathedral again at about six o'clock in the evening and you will find the west end aflame with the rays of the late afternoon sun filtering through the superb glass of the perforated portail, its magnificence set off by the densely black entrance wall—what a richness in the quality of this black, so soft, so warm, what power in the design of this marvellous façade!

### LE MANS

Le Mans lies about a hundred kilometres north of Tours and slightly to the west, in the department of the Sarthe. If you take the train over the branch line, which connects the two cities, there will be leisure, for it makes most of the stops and consumes about two hours. The country is pretty, with little hills and bits of woods, revealing every

now and again an inviting little château, set charmingly, in which it would seem that one might settle down for ever in peaceful security. As for Le Mans itself, as viewed from the station on arrival, it is deplorable in its lack of promise, and it needs all one's assurance to keep in mind such facts as give it a romantic flavour—for instance, that Berengaria, Richard Cœur de Lion's Queen, made it her home, and that the poet Scarron, Madame de Maintenon's eccentric husband, resided here when he was canon of the cathedral.

The cathedral is as remote as possible from this shabby entrance to the modern town, at the far end and beyond it, against the ramparts of the original city, which borders the Sarthe. This is so true that when, in the year 1217, it was desired to increase the size of the choir the bishop obtained from Philippe-Auguste permission to take down that part of the Gallo-Roman wall which blocked the way. The Romans built walls around Le Mans in the third century, and traces of them are still visible close to the left bank of the river, near the cathedral. It was in the same century that Le Mans was evangelized by Saint-Julien, who became its first bishop and to whose memory the cathedral was dedicated.

Le Mans passed in the Middle Ages to the counts of Maine, becoming their capital and residence. About the middle of the eleventh century the citizens secured a communal charter, but in 1063 William the Conqueror seized the town and deprived them of their liberties: these were recovered when the countship of Maine passed to the Plantagenet kings of England. Henry II, the first of this line, was born at Le Mans. Philippe-Auguste captured the city in 1189; it was retaken by King John, subsequently confiscated, and finally ceded to Berengaria of Sicily, who did much for its prosperity. Her tomb is in the cathedral.

To recapture something of the spirit of its history one should not pause over much in the vast cleared space of the Place des Jacobins, from which, standing on its eminence presenting to the new city the huge bulk of its apse, a

formidable grey mass of stone, the cathedral makes so tremendous an effect of boldness and grandeur, but pass up the flight of steps and around the projecting transept with its big tower to the Place du Château, whence the beauties of the *chevet*, masked by the older parts, are for the time forgotten in those of the nave and transept.

This, as will readily be grasped, is a very curious building, a very inconsistent building. It presents, like Tours, some widely different epochs of construction, but, unlike Tours, there has been no attempt, or no successful attempt, to weld the whole together into an harmonious mass. Each part stands, as it were, alone. The transformations and modifications of the original plan are as noticeable from the outside as within the cathedral. The severe western portail is remote in its style from the magnificently accomplished Gothic *chevet*. The low-roofed nave is at least one-third lower than the lofty choir and the two separate parts are simply put together with no deception, no mitigating devices to cloak the inequality.

The earliest work here is the remains of the last of a series of cathedrals built in the second half of the eleventh century under Bishop Vulgrin, who dug the foundations of the nave in 1060. A later bishop consecrated the building in 1093 and transferred to it the relics of Saint-Julien, its patron. The church was then complete with transept towers: but William the Conqueror found that these towers eclipsed his château, which stood upon the *Place*, and ordered their destruction. Meanwhile, in spite of many accidents and vicissitudes, fires and what not, the effort of the bishops was always towards rendering their church larger and more imposing. In 1158 the vaulting of the nave as it now stands was completed, but fifty years later the Gothic movement had penetrated Le Mans and the choir was judged too small. It was then that the Bishop got permission from the King to take down the Gallo-Roman wall which bound the cathedral on its eastern end, in order to rebuild the choir, the one that stands with its soaring apse, its girdle of chapels, and its double am-

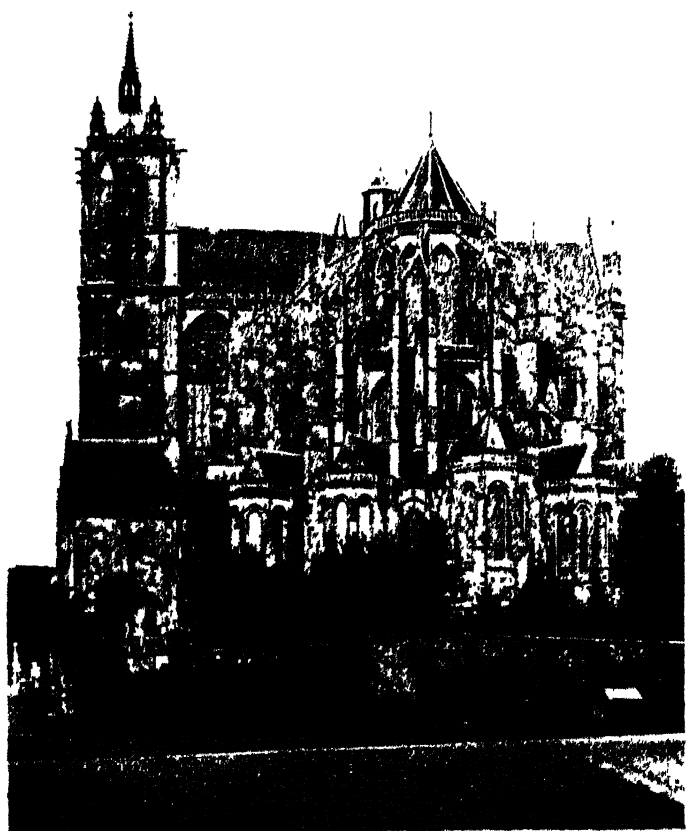
bulatory. This was finished in 1254, the date of its consecration.

But now the choir was so much higher than the nave that the Bishop of that time decided to heighten the transepts to accord and he left a legacy for the execution of this project, which, however, was not carried out until long after his death (1277), in the first half of the fifteenth century. After the fifteenth century no further structural changes were made and the clergy devoted itself to decoration and embellishment. There was a superb *jube*, given by Cardinal Philippe de Luxembourg, who was twice Bishop of Le Mans. A drawing by an architect of the time is the sole document which permits us to know this work in chiselled and painted stone which completely screened the choir from the view of the faithful. It was pure fifteenth-century Gothic. The Huguenots destroyed it when they pillaged the church in 1562, destroying tombs, statues, altars, sculptures, windows, stalls, reliquaries, organs, and breaking the statues of the exterior.

If the cathedral is first approached by the *Grande rue*, one of the narrow streets of the old town, one of the first things seen is the ancient porch on the south side, known as the *Porche du Cavalier*, which shelters a lateral portal in the Transition style of the twelfth century. Under this porch, supporting the sides of the door, are archaic figures, greatly defaced and nearly obliterated, marvels of relief only rivalled by those of Chartres and Athens. We have seen something, similar at Bourges, but none of the sculpture of this epoch is more eloquent than this. Ancestors of the Virgin, no doubt, these people of a remoter age seem to speak across the centuries. Rodin in his *Cathédrales de France* devotes the whole of the pages dedicated to Le Mans to these statues, regarding the artists who made them as his real masters.

As for glass, Le Mans offers one of the rarest and most important fields for study of this fascinating subject, and furnishes specimens of the art from the end of the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries. The most characteristic piece





LE MANS  
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of the earliest glass is in the second window of the side aisle of the nave, on the south side. It represents an *Ascension*, and is generally considered to be the oldest glass painting known. Half of it, the upper half, is unfortunately restored, as may readily be perceived.

The double ambulatory of Le Mans is of a superb robustness, lending itself to the most magnificent compositions of stout pillars, tall columns, and joyous glass. There are three tiers of windows, as at Bourges, one for each storey—the chapels, the ambulatory, and the choir. The choir windows are carried on the circular row of pillars of the triforium, like a crown of jewels. I know of no cathedral where the effect of this particular part is so wonderful. These great windows contain personages of unusual dimensions, the figures being life-size. They represent prophets, apostles, and bishops, with the donors: and here we see much of the old life of Le Mans in the members of corporations, drapers, furriers, architects of the cathedral, bakers, shoemakers, and so forth, who presented the windows in which they appear. The group of bakers, in the lower part of the first window on the right-hand side, is famous. In the central window below the figures of Christ and the Virgin, Bishop Geoffroy de Loudun is represented twice, for it was under his episcopacy that the choir was consecrated.

The ambulatory glass, in the form of lunettes in groups of five lancets each, is extraordinarily rich in deep, clear colour, which gleams and sparkles in the depths of the shadowy heights of the ambulatory behind the great pillars, while farther back, under this series the glass of the chapels in smaller design is seen again in scintillating splendour. The Virgin's Chapel is especially rich and gorgeous. Amongst its eleven windows the central one, devoted to the life of Christ, in almond-shaped panels, similar to the Saint-Eustache window at Sens, is not only superbly fine in colour but of masterly drawing, showing the chief incidents of the story of the Redeemer in the central panels, accompanied by scenes from the Old Testament

in the side panels. One of the most spirited of these is Jonah being cast forth by the whale, one foot on *terra firma* and the other still in the fish's mouth. Another window, the third on the right, tells the story of Theophilus who sold himself to the devil and was redeemed by a miracle performed on his behalf by the Virgin. This window recalls one at Beauvais, but is executed with more vivid detail. There is an especially fine panel in which a large fish, carried over a man's shoulder, is brought as a gift to the misguided Bishop.

As we walk from the austere and restricted nave into the lofty and opulent transept and choir we see how as the cathedral grew Art expanded and flourished: proportions increase, construction waxes bolder, loftier, more confident, columns grow lighter, ribs thinner, arches and windows more pointed. The contrast between the solemn nave and the joyous choir is one of the great curiosities of all France, and this effect is quite as marked in the exterior of the building. There are effects of shadows thrown upon the body of the choir by the gigantic buttresses, built with a splendid directness of purpose only comparable to Beauvais, but more majestic and measured than the buttresses which support that sublime folly.

The episcopal palace in former times occupied the high ground about the cathedral, and together with the royal château completed an imposing group on this high promontory above the river Sarthe.

## CHAPTER XX

### CHARTRES

THE question is frequently asked : ' Which is your favourite cathedral ? ' It is a foolish question, but foolish questions are the delight of certain minds and are not always to be escaped. It is as well to have an answer ready—a favourite flower, a favourite perfume, a favourite cathedral : and although there is no more answer to one than another of these questions, except as the fancy of the moment may dictate, there are nevertheless cathedrals which stand out in one's regard, just as there are certain flowers and perfumes which make their special appeal. There are cathedrals which excite not only admiration but emotion, cathedrals which one loves—Amiens, Reims, Rouen, Chartres . . . Bourges, Albi, Sens . . . the list threatens to include them all ! There are cathedrals which one would never willingly pass by if they lay upon the route ; there are others for which it is worth while to make a considerable *détour* ; there are those which draw one over and over again to special pilgrimages. If there is one more than another which possesses supremely this last quality, it is Chartres.

Chartres, all things considered, is the most sublime, as it is also the only one of the Gothic group which has been preserved intact with all its essentials as Saint-Louis knew them. Chartres has not the harmony of Paris, whose perfect façade surpasses all others in this respect ; it has not the rich ornamentation of Amiens and Reims, as she was ; it lacks the historic associations of the royal cathedral and has not those wounds and sorrows which move us to the depths. Nor has Chartres the bizarrerie of Albi, the verti-

ginous height of Beauvais, the quaintness and unity of Strasbourg, bathed in her sunset glow, nor yet the solemn mystery of Rouen.

Yet if all the others had to be blotted out, if one were to be allowed to keep but one, it is to Chartres unquestionably that one would hold. What then is its special appeal? In what way does it represent more than all the rest? Is it the windows? Is it the sculpture of its lateral porches? Is it the ancient personages of the western portail? Is it the contrasting towers—the *Vieux Clocher*? Or is it rather the vast world, the celestial atmosphere comprised in its dusky interior, where under the rainbow translucence of its myriad windows one treads the cool paths of its quiet ambulatory or penetrates the inky darkness of its unfathomable crypt?

What's in a name? Yet is there not something entrancing in the mere word Chartres? Cool, refreshing, serene, remote. How it differs in sound from Amiens—inviting, amiable; from Bourges—expansive, hospitable; from Senlis—peace and flowers; from Cahors—antique and rustic; from Rouen—massive and sheltering,—Normandy in person. Chartres evokes a vision of something white, fresh, pure, untouched—a light snow-fall, a limpid spring, an unfolding lily, a virgin forest, the song of a lark. Is it perhaps the soul of Mary which has taken up its abode here in this church of churches dedicated to her?

And the cathedral is all of Chartres. Here are no distractions, or such as there are of minute importance in comparison with the great basilica. As it towers above all else on its eminence, as one sees it from afar, so in the town itself there is nothing to tempt us from its contemplation. A charming city enough, certainly, nevertheless all its roads, its steep, tortuous streets, lead inevitably back to the cathedral: that is the great centre, the irresistible magnet; the whole town is its Parvis.

I first saw Chartres many years ago, arriving late one October evening from Le Mans. As I hurried from the train, following the little crowd of travellers along the short

Rue Jean de Beauce, which links the railroad with the old town, I saw the spires towering above the low buildings of the Place Châtelet, and turning to the left across that wide space, making two turns through narrow streets, found myself before the great façade. Day and night embellish Chartres alike, one awakening in her a delicate grace, the other revealing a terrible majesty. Chance decided that my first vision of the monument should be by the radiance of a full moon: the nocturnal silence of the provincial town, the shuttered houses, the white emptiness of the streets, the smooth cleared space before the cathedral with deep, cast shadows lying flat across it, the serenity of the heavens, their stars paled by the effulgence of the high-swung luminary—all things contributed to the grandeur of effect. The cathedral itself took on exaggerated proportions. It filled the eye. Its recessed portions, doors and porches, became caverns of unfathomable darkness, its flat surfaces shimmered in the fantastic light, all inequalities were smoothed out, and the spires, like giants' fingers, pointed aloft with sublime steadfastness. This vision, which has never faded, had that quality of beauty that savours of unreality. One could sleep after it, reassured that the cathedral was there in veritable substance, only to be drawn again early in the morning to the Parvis to make sure, as often there is again the urge to revisit Chartres—Chartres, which is not the old city whose houses perch upon the slopes bordering the Eure, but two towers, different and charming, that rise over a population of statues.

'Our ancestors', says Rodin, 'realized here their master work, at a time when the genius of the race knew an all powerful period, comparable to that which Greece knew at its apotheosis.' Yet nothing, really, is known of these workmen. Humbly anonymous they worked as never workmen had worked before to prepare for the Virgin whom they venerated a dwelling worthy of her acceptance, a habitation which should give the impression of a mystic city where the soul communes with God without effort.

The ground upon which the master work stands is

thrice hallowed and served from remotest times as a place of worship of the Virgin Mother, as we shall see. The history of Chartres itself goes back to about the year 600 B.C. and, according to ancient tradition, the cathedral is planted upon the site of a sacred grove where the druids assembled to make their sacrifices and devotions. Old annals speak of a grotto in this wood in which a Pagan temple had been built over a hundred years before the birth of Christ and tell us that this temple stood upon the place where formerly had been an altar upon which the druids had raised a statue to the *Virgini partitura*. At the end of the first century, the city having been evangelized by Saint-Savinien and Saint-Potentien, these replaced the Pagan temple by a church in which the first Christians united. But the missionaries were persecuted and martyred and their bodies thrown into the bottom of the well of the sacred grotto. This is the same well which is shown to-day in the crypt of Notre-Dame. It is called the *Puits des Saints-Forts*, the Well of the Strong Saints. Their church was entirely demolished.

The Christians rebuilt several times, but their church was as often ravaged by fires and, aside from the well, the most ancient vestige of all these erections that remains dates from the tenth century. Bishop Fulbert, however, is usually accounted founder of the present building, for upon the ruins of former churches, and still over the site of the druids' temple, he, seconded by Robert the Pious, resolved to construct a monument worthy of sheltering the *Sancta Camisa*. This was in the year 1020.

Now the *Sancta Camisa* was the tunic of the Virgin which Constantine V had sent to Charlemagne in 792, wrapped in the veil of the Empress Irene. Charles the Bald presented it to Chartres. Whether one chooses to believe that the fragment of tissue preserved in a cabinet behind the high altar at Chartres is a true relic, as the faithful of those days firmly believed, or whether one prefers to submit to Calvin's destructive teaching and deny the plausibility of such eloquent souvenirs, the history of Art cannot disdain these



relics. The part that they played in the construction of churches and chapels is too important for their authenticity to be laughed off as the humbug of unscrupulous priests trading upon the credulity of a simple people. Believe what you like, but do not forget that the most perfect monument of the thirteenth century, the Sainte-Chapelle, is but a shrine destined to contain what was believed to be the Crown of Thorns, and that the most ingenious inventions of the goldsmiths of the Middle Ages were born of the necessity of enclosing the bone of a saint in crystal or embedding it in gold. Is it in good taste to ridicule objects which have impassioned many generations of our forefathers? These relics furthermore had really in them supernatural virtues in a sense, for wherever was found the bone of an apostle or the blood of a martyr a rich abbey was born and a village grew, while at Aix-la-Chapelle, on the occasion of its jubilee, the announcement that the loin-cloth which Jesus wore upon the cross was to be shown set forty-thousand pilgrims running from all over Europe on the chance of getting near enough to be able to perceive the relic, as we of an enlightened and sophisticated world run to prize fights or crowd about railway stations hoping to catch a glimpse of the latest Atlantic flier.

Though more magnificent than its predecessors, Bishop Fulbert's cathedral had no better fate: in 1134 a great fire at Chartres gutted the city and ruined the church.

It is Huysmans<sup>1</sup> who gives the most colourful description of its rebuilding, of the curious state of religious exaltation which caused whole populations in Normandy, in Brittany, in the Ile-de-France, in the North, as well as the Chartrains themselves, to throw down their own work and leave their homes to succour Chartres. 'And what souls they had, these artists'! says Huysmans. 'For we know that they worked only when they were in a state of grace. To build this splendid basilica, purity was required even of the workmen.' This would seem incredible if authentic documents did not support the fact. For letters have come to light

<sup>1</sup> J.-K. Huysmans, *La Cathédrale*, p. 206.

in the annals of the Benedictines, documents have been discovered amongst the manuscripts of the Bibliothèque Nationale ; a Latin book of the Miracles of Notre-Dame was found in the library of the Vatican, translated into French by a thirteenth-century poet, called Jehan le Marchant, in all of which is recounted how, after the ruins caused by fire, the church dedicated to the black Virgin was rebuilt.

What happened attained the sublime. It was such a crusade as had never been seen. It was a combat against the material forces, in the workshops, of a people determined to save the Virgin, whom they pictured as literally without shelter, just as she had been on that day when she gave birth to her Son. The news that she was without a home, this Madonna whom France loved as it loved its own mother, threw the whole country into a state of agitation and all rushed to her aid. The rich brought silver and jewels, the poor muscle and brawn, and rich and poor harnessed themselves together to drag wagon-loads of wheat, oil, wine, wood, lime, whatever could serve to feed the workmen and build the cathedral. It was an uninterrupted migration, a spontaneous exodus. All the routes to Chartres were crowded with pilgrims, dragging whole trees, transporting beams, and with the strong and healthy came the sick and infirm, to form a rear-guard to help along the work by their prayers. The camp thus formed extended for miles around and the lighted candles set up on the carts in the evenings made a field of stars in the Beauce.

Here was an army recruited from all classes of society, for among them were cavaliers and great ladies, hordes of old people and children, of men and women, disciplined in the winking of an eye. Divine love was so strong that it overcame distances and abolished caste ; the seigneurs harnessed themselves with the tillers of the soil and piously accomplished the tasks of beasts of burden ; patricians helped peasants to prepare the mortar and to cook the food ; all lived in the common abandonment of prejudice ; all

consented to be but workmen, but machines, but backs and arms, to be at the disposal of the architects, who, in turn, came out of their convents to direct the work.<sup>1</sup>

Of this prodigious effort there survive the crypt, the west façade, and the tower of the *Vieux Clocher*. Lightning destroyed the bulk of the building in 1194. But now had arrived the brilliant reign of Philippe-Auguste, and upon the ruins of the cathedral the Pope's legate assembled the clergy and the people and exhorted them to build again. Gifts poured in from all parts; the King contributed generously, the Bishop and the canons abandoned their revenues for three years, and in 1220 the church, rebuilt upon a new plan, was again under cover and there remained only its porches and its left-hand tower to finish and its interior to embellish. Finally in 1260 the work was sufficiently advanced to permit Pierre de Mincy to consecrate the cathedral in the presence of Louis IX and the royal family.

Chartres had its part in the relics of Constantinople, and the work of rebuilding was greatly stimulated when, in 1205, the Count of Blois sent to the cathedral from the Orient the head of Saint Anne. '*La tête de la mère*', says an old manuscript, '*fut reçue avec une grande joie dans l'église de la fille.*' So the north portail, begun apparently about the year 1210, seems to commemorate in one of its statues the recent acquisition of the relic. Against the pier of its central door stands, not the Virgin carrying the Child, as was usual, but Saint Anne carrying the Virgin. This singularity is repeated in the interior, where one of the windows of the clerestory placed under the north rose shows Saint Anne again holding the Virgin in her arms. It is apparent that it was designed especially to honour Mary's mother and that it is the presence of the head in the Treasure which accounts for her unusual position here.

Of the Roman basilica, erected with so much enthusiasm, the Gothic cathedral incorporated the crypt, the façade in part, and the *Vieux Clocher*. The two square towers which frame the façade were begun in about the year 1115

<sup>1</sup> Huysmans.

and finished in 1145, with the exception of their stone steeples, and these steeples represent the extremes in the styles of the edifice. The *Vieux Clocher* is justly considered one of the most beautiful of spires ; it passes from the square to the octagon with remarkable science, and the flèche springs skyward majestically to a height of nearly three hundred and fifty feet. It was finished about the year 1160. The new steeple, about thirty feet higher than its companion, is one of the latest architectural features of the cathedral. Flamboyant in style it differs totally from the rest of the construction by the richness and profusion of its ornament as well as by its more voluptuous contours. It was built between 1507 and 1514 by Jean Texier.

The archaic figures of the façade, the most celebrated of this type of statuary, which we have already noticed at Bourges and Le Mans, are contemporary with the old steeple. There are nineteen of these colossal stone portraits, ranged each side of the doors, forming the most famous part of a magnificent assemblage. There are seven kings, seven prophets, or saints, and five queens. Of these there were once twenty-four, but five have disappeared without leaving a trace. All wear the nimbus, except the first three, which stand at the base of the new steeple, and all are sheltered under open-work canopies. It is generally supposed that these personages represent the ancestors of Christ, according to the Gospel of Saint Matthew in which not only the men but the women are mentioned. The most admirable are the queens with their inscrutable countenances, their austere drapery, their attenuated forms.

The three doors which give access to the nave are decorated according to a precise plan : the right-hand entrance, called the Virgin's Door, is sculptured with scenes representing the entrance of Christ into this world ; that on the left is devoted to His Ascension, which marks the end of His sojourn here below ; while in the tympanum of the central entrance is figured the familiar scene of the Last Judgment, upon the occasion of the Second Advent. The

interval between the birth and Ascension is pictured in its entirety upon the capitals of the portail, where, in vivid little scenes peopled with over two hundred little figures, is illustrated the earthly life of the Messiah.

Between the twelfth-century west portail and the thirteenth-century north and south façades the gap of a hundred years is very noticeable. If the old front is plain and simple the sides are as agreeably ornate, and the great porches, besides giving much character to the monument, being rather personal to it, make tremendous accents and furnish glorious entrances into its rich interior. In its remarkable iconography the north porch retraces the life of the Virgin, while the south porch is dedicated to the story of the Last Judgment. The two porches contain between them something over seven hundred statues, the north side being reserved for personages of the Old Testament and the south to those of the New Testament. These great statues count amongst the most extraordinary produced by the Middle Ages.

Chartres is blessed amongst cathedrals by the intelligence of its guardians. It would be impossible to proceed far without recommending travellers to the care of Monsieur Etienne Houvet, who for many years has presided over the interior. It is thanks to him that Chartres, above all other churches of France, has been photographed from one end to the other—ensembles, sculptures, and windows—so that there is a complete record of its smallest part. When the windows were dismounted during the War it was possible to photograph them at ease, and this was done to such good purpose that large portfolios of reproductions are available to the student and amateur. To study the interior one cannot do better than to seek out the guardian and make the round with him.

The effect from the western entrance, through a small door tucked away in a corner, is indeed sublime, and one might well think oneself transported to another world, lighted by the iridescence of the resplendent windows, of which an almost complete series contem-

porary with the building fills the vast and numerous openings.

The richness of the glass at Chartres is inexhaustible. You may well dwell upon it for its like is not to be found elsewhere. Each window is a feast in itself. Most of them are thirteenth century. Practically all the glass is contemporary with the epochs of construction. As the great façade is twelfth century so the three windows of the end of the nave are of that time and may be distinguished amongst the more melancholy lights of the following century for their clear, pure blues, their intense primary colours.

Of these windows the central one is devoted to the Life of Christ ; that on the left-hand side to the Passion ; and the right-hand window to the genealogy of the Virgin in the form of the Jesse Tree. The latter is the most celebrated of windows, both for design and colour ; in it the artist achieved the most celestial blue imaginable. The design, in which the branching tree forms panels to enclose the figures of Jesse, four kings, and the Virgin and Infant in the top, while to right and left are the prophets who announce the coming of the Messiah, is one of the most graceful of all the windows that have come down to us from the great period.

Another twelfth-century panel which escaped the fire of 1194 is that celebrated piece known as *Notre-Dame-de-la-Belle-Verrière*. It is enclosed in a thirteenth-century window of the south ambulatory. To enjoy its exquisite beauty to the full, choose an hour when the sun is shining through it, giving it celestial radiance.

We know that the cathedral was consecrated in the presence of Louis IX and the royal family, and a souvenir of their passage at the time is preserved in the north rose and the five lancets under it, which were given by Saint-Louis and his mother, in about the year 1230. The date of this window has been approximated from the fact that while it bears the King's arms and those of Blanche of Castille—the fleur-de-lis and the three castles



CHARTRES  
THE AMBULATORY





—those of Marguerite of Provence, Louis's consort, are lacking. From this it is certain that the window was given before the young King's marriage. In this window the Virgin and her mother and all the prophets are represented as of dark skin. The black Virgin is a feature of the imagery of Chartres, Le Mans, and some other churches of the region. The best explanation offered is that in the minds of the artists these persons were Oriental and therefore of dark skin.

Opposite the window given by Saint-Louis is the rose of the south transept given by Pierre Mauclerc, his wife and daughter, who are pictured in the lower part. This rose is especially interesting for the figures in the lancets. Here are the four great prophets carrying the four evangelists on their backs. In the centre the Virgin carries the Infant ; to the left Isaiah bears Saint Matthew, then comes Jeremiah with Saint Luke ; and to the right is Ezekiel carrying Saint John, and Daniel bearing Saint Mark. This audacious symbolism means that the evangelists sprung from the prophets, but that they see from a greater height and hence farther. The subject of the rose itself is borrowed from the Apocalypse.

Many of the windows are rendered more interesting by the groups of their donors, included usually in the lower panels, though occasionally figured in the upper sections, especially if the window is surmounted by a little rose. The thirteenth-century windows generally offer the image and sometimes the names of their donors, and thus we see monks at prayer, bishops carrying the model of their gifts in their hands, knights recognizable by their blasons, money-changers testing the quality of coins, furriers selling pelts, butchers killing cattle, sculptors carving capitals. The corporations or private individuals who gave the windows in this way perpetuated the souvenir of their generosity, while, on the other hand, these homely scenes are precious in themselves as they permit us to reconstruct the life of the epoch which they illustrate in the liveliest manner. In the third window of the south aisle, devoted to the

Parable of the Good Samaritan, the guild of shoe-makers were the donors, and these are represented at work. It seems that cobblers flourished at Chartres in the Middle Ages owing to the pilgrims wearing out their shoes in journeying here, and so several windows were presented by them.

The connection is often plain between the donor and the saint whom he has chosen to be pictured. The corporations usually gave the church the history of their protector, of the saint whose image ornamented the banners of their federations. At Bourges the Saint Thomas window was offered by the stone-cutters because the apostle was the patron of architects, and hence of all men who worked under them. At Chartres the grocers had made at their expense a window to Saint Nicolas, their patron, and the basket-weavers gave a window to Saint Anthony, for the reason that he was the superior of the monasteries of Thebes where the monks made their living plaiting baskets, and so in the Middle Ages Saint Anthony was the patron of this industry.

When the donors did not offer the image of their patron it is sometimes possible to divine for what reason they chose some other saint. Sometimes the corporations gave windows dedicated to persons sympathetically related to their trades rather than to the patrons of their orders, and so the barrel-makers of Chartres, instead of offering the cathedral the history of their patron, who was undoubtedly Sainte-Catherine, gave the Noah window, apparently because the patriarch planted the vine, while at Tours the labourers gave the Adam window, since Adam was the first to dig by the sweat of his brow. It is not surprising that three cavaliers, Pierre and Raoul de Courtenay and Julien de Castillon, presented Chartres with three windows representing Saint Eustache, Saint George, and Saint Martin, for these saints were soldiers and models of chivalry. Of these, it must be noted, only one, dedicated to Saint-Martin, remains, but the others are known by description. Again Amaury de Montfort, who is recognized by his shield,

appears at Chartres in the rose window consecrated to Saint Paul : is it not because Paul, the apostle who carries the sword, was also in the Middle Ages one of the patrons of warriors ? Guillaume Durand in his *Rationale* tells that knights rose when the epistle read by the priest was from Saint Paul.

As I write Mr. Rockefeller's generous gift to Chartres has just been made public. He is to finance the replacing of the several gaps in the series, windows which at different times, long ago, were dismounted, usually to let in light upon some of the later so-called embellishments, such as those classic marble reliefs of the inside of the choir and the baldaquin, about which the less said the better. Chartres is hopeful of securing copies of the windows that were destroyed as it so happens that cartoons exist, in the archives of the national library, which were made in the seventeenth century by an enthusiast in heraldry. It is expected, however, that the new windows will be plainly marked and dated so that there will be no confusion as to which are original and which copies.

Several peculiarities in the interior of Notre-Dame may puzzle the observant visitor. The paving, for instance, aside from its merit in having been trodden by multitudes of pilgrims, is curious for its labyrinth, which occupies the entire width of the nave in a complicated circle. In the Middle Ages the faithful followed its white lines on their knees, and many indulgences were the reward of this devotional practice. At the same time, when the cathedral attracted large crowds, owing largely to the renown of its sacred crypt, many pilgrims used to sleep in the church and this necessitated frequent washing up of the floor. The observant visitor will have noticed that there are four steps on the north side of the nave and two only on the south, leading from the side aisles. This practical detail in the midst of so much beauty is not, I think, without piquancy : a reservoir was situated in the north tower and from it, on account of this inequality, water could be made to flow from one side of the nave to the other.

Another interesting feature of the interior is the lack of tombs, for out of respect for the abode of Our Lady neither king nor bishop was ever interred under its roof. And what souvenirs attach to its mystic vastness! It was in entering by the small western door that Napoleon said: 'An atheist would be uneasy here.' Three popes have knelt upon its stones. Before the altar Henri IV was consecrated in 1594.

A feature of Chartres which has its admirers is the enclosure of the choir. When Jean Texier, or Jean de Beauce as he was called, had finished the flamboyant flèche of the north tower, the canons asked him to work upon the enclosure of the choir. It is a late work, spread over a great many years and merging the flamboyant style into that of the Renaissance. A succession of sculptors worked upon it, from Jean Texier in 1519 to the year 1714. There are forty scenes recounting the life of the Virgin and of Our Lord. As the work grows more modern it loses in vitality and interest, and however admirable it may be in itself it makes a regrettable anachronism here.

The Chapel of Notre-Dame-sous-Terre, in the Crypt of Chartres, is one of the most venerated of sanctuaries. Huysmans celebrated it in some unforgettable pages. The statue of the Virgin is a modern copy of the original, which the Revolutionists destroyed. Before the old one all the kings and queens of France have knelt in adoration: Philippe-Auguste and Isabelle de Hainaut, Blanche of Castille and Saint-Louis, Philippe of Valois, Jean le Bon, Charles V, Charles VI, Charles VIII and Anne of Brittany, then François I, Henri III and Louise de Vaudémont, Catherine de Medicis, Henri IV, Anne of Austria, Louis XV, Marie Leczinska . . . and many others. All the nobility of France, Ferdinand of Spain and Léon de Lusignan, the last King of Armenia, and Pierre de Courtenay, the Emperor of Constantinople . . . all kneeling like poor people to-day imploring Notre-Dame-sous-Terre to intercede for them.

Besides the Crypt there is another visit, in the contrary direction, which adventurous visitors should not fail to

make, under the guidance of the custodian of the towers. As one scrambles over the roof, climbs into the belfries, walks along the perilous ridges, led by this intrepid little man, one may dwell upon another aspect of pious pilgrimage—upon the architects and archæologists in whose footsteps one follows—for who of these has not visited and studied Chartres?

## CHAPTER XXI

### SCATTERED BEAUTIES

I HAD not thought when I undertook to write this book that the subject would have been so difficult to quit. The more that one looks into the matter of the cathedrals of France the more the theme takes hold upon the imagination, grows, widens, and expands; the more one feels drawn to make those little voyages that include, among a mass of other interests, groups of beautiful churches; the more the beautiful churches themselves seem to be the most worthy objective of such little voyages.

Although I have attempted no more than to touch the high spots in the foregoing pages; to treat of the pre-eminently great cathedrals, I have warmed to my task and I find that I cannot lay down my pen until a few of the lesser churches have at least been named. There is scarcely one but has its special appeal, its unique feature, its particular treasure. This cannot be better instanced than in the case of the cathedral of Moulins, whose cold, regular façade is a nineteenth-century reproduction of Gothic, and whose interior possesses little in its inherent structure or ornament to detain us were it not that its sacristy contains a masterpiece of the Art of the Middle Ages, in a perfectly preserved triptych by that great artist known, for want of a name, as the *Maître de Moulins*. It represents a glorious Virgin enthroned, with the Child upon her knee, surrounded by the celestial choir, while the side panels contain portraits of the donors, Pierre de Bourbon and Anne de Beaujeu, his wife, presented by their patrons, Saint Peter and Saint Anne. Behind Anne de Beaujeu kneels their daughter, Suzanne.

Moulins is in the centre of France. The fact that nobody goes there is not the least of its charm. It is sweetly sleepy and unsophisticated and very beautiful and has style as well as history, into which we cannot go now, but should any reader happen to stray into this charming old town let him not fail to take the drive to the abbey church of Souvigny, only twelve kilometres away, and see the beautiful Bourbon tombs, which rival in interest and grandeur the royal sepulchres of Saint-Denis.

If one wanted to be very original it would be charming to settle down at Moulins and do from there, by motor, a group of fine cathedrals which group themselves around it, in Burgundy and the south-east—Autun, Dijon, Lyon, Nevers, Auxerre, Arles, and Clermont-Ferrand. A road map of the region will show how it can best be planned. Autun is the nearest, unless it is Nevers to which the route is more direct, and both of these cathedrals have very special points. Autun is remarkable for its tympanum, an illustrious piece of sculpture representing the Last Judgment by an artist who signed himself Giselbert. It is one of the most perfectly preserved of its kind for a strange reason. The stupid canons in 1766, feeling that they had outgrown the work of a barbarous epoch, had the tympanum covered with plaster, and this saved it from the iconoclasts of the Revolution. But there was a difficulty in getting it wholly out of sight—the head of the Christ was higher than the rest of the composition, and so the good canons sawed it off. There it stands to-day, quite perfect except for the missing head.

Now Nevers is interesting because of its double apse—one at each end of the nave. It was built at two distinct epochs, and the separate parts have been merely stuck together. This is one of the two double-apse churches in France, the other being at Besançon. At Nevers the peculiarity resulted from the original placing of the high altar at the west, a defect felt to be intolerable in France in the sixteenth century when the church was rebuilt, without, however, destroying the old sanctuary.

At Nevers we are not far from Auxerre whose superb

cathedral, built over the crypt of a Roman edifice of the tenth century, is one of the romantic churches of France. Built at the time of the greatest Gothic splendour (it was begun in 1215) the monument by its general structure and harmonious lines, by the richness and variety of its sculpture, is worthy of this wonderful century of faith. The apsidal chapel is considered the *chef-d'œuvre* of the cathedral, a bold construction in which is seen one of the most ingenious applications of the system of Gothic vaulting. To notice specially are two columns nine inches in diameter by twenty-one feet in height cut from the hard stone of Tonnerre.

At Dijon the cathedral was originally the abbey church of Saint-Benigne, which was for the dukes of Burgundy what Reims was for the kings of France. The church, dating from the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries, is not a great edifice and the decoration is poor, but the columns of the crypt, with their interesting capitals, are worth examining.

These churches lie north of Moulins. Going south we have, at about equal distances, Lyon and Clermont Ferrand. The cathedral of Lyon is of the Roman period of architecture, its earliest constructions dating from 1160 to 1180. It has the massive look of the southern churches, being very wide, but its great beauty is its celebrated Bourbon Chapel, in the flamboyant style. The date is 1486. It has fine windows and its chief façade is remarkable for its magnificent proportions and its fifteenth-century decoration.

Of the building bishops, Hugues de la Tour was famous, and when Saint-Louis, in 1248, invited him to Paris with a number of prelates of his kingdom to witness the consecration of the Sainte-Chapelle, he was greatly amazed at the charming lightness of this building, and when he returned home he found his Romanesque cathedral heavy and sombre. With much difficulty he raised money to erect a Gothic building to replace it. The choir was built in 1287, the transept and part of the nave in the fourteenth century, after which there was a long pause, and Viollet-le-Duc



finished the building. Although the cathedral has the cold regularity of the modern copy it is interesting for the material of which it is built, a dark grey lava from the volcanoes of the Auvergne, a hard, resisting substance which contributes not a little to the severity of its aspect.

Arles is a long drive from Moulins, going directly south from Lyon, but its cathedral has points of great beauty. The great feature of Arles is its Roman porch, which dates, however, from 1221. This porch, one of the most remarkable of France and somewhat similar to the porch of Autun, is preceded by a flight of ten steps, and flanked right and left by bas-reliefs separated by granite columns, between which stand statues of the apostles. The arch is circular, as at Autun, and very deep, and its tympanum contains a seated Christ presiding at the Last Judgment. The beautiful cloister of Saint-Trophime is its other great distinguishing feature. Composed of four galleries with fifty arcades resting upon white marble columns, part of it is Roman, of the same epoch as the porch, and part of it is Gothic. There is much fine and varied sculpture here and on a sunny day in the morning there are few more romantic settings for meditation and rest.

In the centre and south of France, setting forth from Orléans, Bourges, or Tours, another group of cathedrals presents itself, and by criss-crossing about one may do Poitiers, Angoulême, Limoges, Tulle, Périgueux, Bordeaux, Auch, and Toulouse, *en route* for Carcassonne, Narbonne, and Perpignan in a series of exciting stages. Saint-Pierre of Poitiers is one of the most remarkable churches of the school of Aquitania. Its nave is a renowned example of the Plantagenet style, sometimes called Angevin. Poitiers has some fine thirteenth-century windows, and another of its points is its square apse, one of three cathedral examples in France, the others being Laon and Dol. In connection with Poitiers we think of Angers with its nave, also remarkable for its Plantagenet vaulting, a curious freak of architecture peculiar to the region, for Anjou at the time of the construction of its cathedral belonged to the Plantagenets.

Angers too has windows, the oldest dating from 1170, and its interior is further enriched by tapestries hung around the walls of the nave and transepts and measuring in their combined length over a hundred metres. They were given to the cathedral by René d'Anjou.

Toulouse, Bordeaux, and Limoges all have cathedrals more or less interesting for their history if not for their architecture. Saint-André of Bordeaux is one of the curiosities of the south-west as one of the widest churches covered in the Middle Ages. The architect who achieved the feat deserves the more credit as this was one of the first Gothic churches of Aquitania. Saint-Jean of Limoges is remarkable for a magnificent north portail, built at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, and for its equally splendid Renaissance rood-screen. Its most striking architectural feature is its campanile, dating from the twelfth century. Toulouse is famous for its elaborate seventeenth-century high altar and reredos, somewhat in the Spanish style, and possesses some beautiful Flemish tapestries.

The cathedral of Angoulême lost most of its character in a nineteenth-century restoration. Being a very rich church it fell readily a victim to the passions of the Reformation, especially as Calvin lived in Angoulême from 1527 to 1530, making many proselytes. Devastations in the name of Protestantism were great, and in 1562 the cathedral was ruined. It may be classed in a sense with Périgueux and Cahors because of its cupolas, of which three cover the nave.

In that picturesque part of France known as the Corrèze, between Brive and Clermont-Ferrand, lies Tulle with its interesting cathedral dedicated to Saint-Martin, the patron saint of travellers. Planted in a gorge of the Corrèze, the cathedral rears its flèche, marking this rugged country which saw the birth of Clement VI, Innocent VI, and Gregory XI, Popes of Avignon. Saint-Martin has neither choir nor transepts and is one of the most complete examples of Transition style, uniting Romanesque and Gothic.

Travellers in Normandy will find much to interest them in the great cathedrals, among which, besides those already treated, are Séez, Lisieux, Evreux, and, to stretch a point, Mantes—for Mantes is not a cathedral. Séez is a fine mass of Gothic with certain analogies to Saint-Ouen of Rouen. Having suffered unduly from various devastations it is a much restored edifice, which still retains, however, its original lines. The cathedral of Evreux is admirable for the beauty of many of its parts, but on the whole is too much of a patchwork to produce an entirely pleasing effect. It mingles many styles, from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries.

The church of Lisieux stands upon the market-place, in itself an attraction, and offers a remarkably beautiful façade. Considered one of the most ancient of the Gothic churches of Normandy it speaks by its size for the power enjoyed by this diocese at the end of the twelfth century. Of its points, there is the fine lantern over the cross of the transept and a handsome south portail.

Though Notre-Dame of Mantes is not a cathedral, no reader of Henry Adams will pass by the little church of Gassicourt which marks the farthest reach of the Norman style. Mantes barred the path of the Norman Conquest, and William the Conqueror met his death here. Mantes is interesting by comparison with Notre-Dame of Paris. It was built at the same time, perhaps by the same architect, and reproduces the general dispositions, the mode of structure, and some of the details of the larger edifice, and having never been altered, as Paris was, it remains practically as when both were new, about the year 1200.

Now west of Paris, where there is a great richness of churches, we may indicate, aside from those already described, Meaux, Chalons-sur-Marne, Verdun, Toul, and Metz, before arriving at the extreme limit of our area, which is Strasbourg. If Mantes is a short and pleasant run from Paris in a west nor'westerly direction, Meaux, which lies only twenty-eight miles from the metropolis to the east nor'east, is even more accessible and on the whole a more

beautiful place, though the church is not superior. Saint-Etienne of Meaux was begun at the time of the religious wars, and the disasters of its epoch prevented it from realizing in its architecture the grand plans upon which it was conceived. The unfinished façade, begun in 1326, is imposing. The interior is also admirable in the Gothic style. We may see at Meaux, incorporated in the modern pulpit, the panels of an earlier pulpit from which the immortal Bossuet preached.

The old city of Chalons-sur-Marne boasts a cathedral of some importance, a thirteenth-century construction with a classic façade. It has an extraordinary wealth of ancient funeral stones covering most of the floor space. Many have been walked over until all trace of engraving and effigy has been worn away, others have been cut about and refitted in some unintelligent relaying of the paving, but some splendid ones have been raised up and fixed against the walls and pillars of the choir.

For forty years, from 1519 to 1559, the then two great powers of Europe, France and Austria, were at war. This war finished with the treaty of Cambrésis, which assured to France the cities of Metz, Toul, and Verdun, celebrated under the name of the Three Bishoprics. They were conquered in 1552 by Henri II. Each possessed a beautiful cathedral. That of Verdun is little more than a memory, but those of Toul and Metz are in excellent preservation and monuments of great interest. Saint Stephen of Toul has affinity with the cathedral of Tours. Its western towers, of late date, terminate like those of Saint-Gatien in octagonal lanterns with details verging on the Renaissance, yet so Gothic in design, so charmingly executed, as almost to induce belief, despite the fanciful extravagance of their ornament, that architects were approaching something new and still more beautiful in the French manner, when the Italian influence overtook them and arrested its development.

At Metz the building of its cathedral proceeded slowly, which accounts for many imperfections in its ensemble ;

but if perfect unity has not been realized, Saint-Etienne is none the less one of the most remarkable religious monuments raised by French architecture in Lorraine. If its exterior is rather dull, owing perhaps to the colour of its stone, which is brown, there is in the interior a striking impression of nobility and solemn grandeur quite personal to itself and due to the sobriety of its decoration and to the height of the columns which support the vaulting of the wide nave. Its effectiveness is greatly enhanced, too, by the elevation of the sanctuary and ambulatory, raised by a long flight of steps above the nave, in a manner reminiscent of Strasbourg. The church has a remarkable series of windows. The exterior, despite the ungrateful character of its material, is not without certain admirable features. It has ample proportions, elegant buttresses, a charming disposition of windows, and two square towers each furnished with a monumental door; while among things curious to discover is a statue of William II of Germany, in the guise of the prophet Daniel, made by order of the former emperor.

So one might continue, always discovering new beauties, until all of the one hundred and fifty cathedrals of France had been seen. But enough has been said, I think, to indicate the rich resources of a great country in only one of its many phases of interest and charm.



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